

DOWNIE 1936-37  
BARNUM 1871

# Bandwagon

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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## THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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### THIS MONTH'S COVER

The lithograph reproduced on this issue's cover was used by Downie Bros. Circus in 1936. The George Hanneford Family had joined the Downie show for the 1932 season and had remained the following seasons until 1936. This litho, designed and printed by the Erie Litho Co., was probably first used for the 1932 season.

The title is in red outlined in black with Big 3 Ring in blue outlined in black. A small version of the poster was used on half sheet upright dates. Original from the Pfening Collection.

### ADDRESS CHANGE REMINDER

When you move and do not advise the BANDWAGON of your new address in advance your magazine is discarded by the post office and a postage due notice is returned to us with a collect charge of 25¢.

As we have advised in the past, your copy of the BANDWAGON cannot be replaced free.

So please, please advise us in advance, so you will not loose your copy and we will not have to hand over 25¢ to the postal service.

### THE 1977 CHS CONVENTION

Already we have received letters concerning the dates of the 1977 CHS convention to be held in Sarasota, Florida.

Plans are being made, but we are not quite ready to give the dates and full details. It is hoped that all information will be published in the September October issue. The dates will probably be in the first or second week of February, 1977.

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### KEEP THOSE APPLICATIONS COMING

The officers and directors are delighted with the interest and concern of all CHS members in finding additional new members. In past years we have lost about

125 members and subscribers from non payment of dues. At this point we have gained about that many new members, so now we must continue our effort to have a net gain for the year.

Please tell your friends about the CHS and show them the Bandwagon. There are many others who would enjoy membership so, keep at it.

## CHEPACHET, RHODE ISLAND HONORS "BETTY" THE ELEPHANT

Hackaliah Bailey, of Somers, New York, owned the elephant "Old Bet" when she was shot in Alfred, Maine on July 26, 1816. She was only the second elephant that had reached America (in 1804) and, as such, proved to be a fine subject for exhibition and the curiosity of the public added greatly to Bailey's income. He immediately began searching for a replacement for his lost investment and in December, 1817 it arrived.

The ship *Trident* brought the second "Betty" into Boston<sup>1</sup> and she was put on exhibition immediately, and for the next eight-and-one-half years proved as great an attraction as her predecessor. She was usually referred to as "Little Bet" to distinguish her from "Old Bet" and was advertised as "The Learned Elephant" because she had been taught a few tricks. She would lie down, raise one leg, uncork a bottle and drink its contents and such things. Eleven years old when she was imported, she was more impressive than "Old Bet" who had been imported at the age of four.

Bailey leased the animal from time to time and traded portions of her income for that of other animals. A man by the name of Marcus Sloat acquired a one-third interest in her at one time, as he sold this on March 15, 1825 to Thaddeus and Gerald Crane for \$3,000.<sup>2</sup> The total value, \$9,000, would seem to be in line with animal prices of the time.

In 1826 Crane, June and Company either owned or leased the elephant and, in turn, leased it to Gerald Crane and L.B. Titus who took her on the road from her winter quarters in Boston on March 18. By May 24 they had reached Chepachet, Rhode Island. Early on the morning of the 25th the caravan, one man on foot and two on horseback, accompanied the beast toward Smithfield. As they crossed the bridge over the Chapachet River two rifles fired in quick succession and the elephant fell dead.

The citizens of Chepachet were very much

affected by the tragedy. In the morning they took up a collection in order to provide a reward for the capture of the miscreants and that evening held a protest meeting in the village. An investigation found that six young men were in on the deed. Fenner Eddy and John Inman were the ones who fired the shots. They placed themselves in a mill near the bridge, armed themselves with two guns, one with a seven-bullet load, another with two. From a distance of thirty feet they could hardly miss the poor beast. Why they did it was never adequately explained. Their families paid fines of about \$1,500 to the showmen, a tenth of the value of the loss.<sup>3</sup>

This year, on May 25, 1976, the village decided to honor the elephant and the event and under the direction of local historians, Richmond and Edna Kent, a ceremony was held. After the killing the bridge was known as "Elephant Bridge" even when it was replaced after the 1867 flood. More recently it was dedicated as the William G. Schanck, Jr. Memorial Bridge, in honor of a young man killed in Viet Nam. The ceremony was an official Bicentennial observance. At 2:00 p.m. on the one hundred-fiftieth anniversary a procession featuring an elephant from the Southwick Animal Farm in Mendon, Massachusetts, paraded to the bridge where a bronze plaque, gift of the Kents, was unveiled. It reads:

May 25, 1826 — May 25, 1976  
Diverse Hands Fired Upon  
BETTY  
One of America's First Elephants  
At the North End of the  
Rustic Span that arched  
Chepachet River.

A crowd of 2,000 people attended the ceremony which included a high school band and choir. A wall plaque was struck by a local artist in an edition of 50 which has the words "Learned Elephant, 1826-1976, Chepachet" surrounding a bas-relief of an elephant. The event was well-chronicled by the *Woonsocket Call* and the *Norwich Journal-Bulletin* and Mr. and Mrs. Kent kindly supplied the Circus Historical Society with clippings and photographs concerning this most interesting observance.

1. *Columbian Centinel* (Boston), December 13, 1817.

2. Bill of sale reproduced in Scharf, *History of Westchester County*, II, 482.

3. *Providence* (Rhode Island) *Patriot*, June, 8, 1826.

## Classic Circus Scenics



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SINCE 1944



# P.T. BARNUM'S GREAT TRAVELLING MUSEUM, MENAGERIE, CARAVAN AND HIPPODROME:

## THE SEASON OF 1871

By Stuart Thayer

The story of the origin of P.T. Barnum's Circus has been told many times. Both Barnum and his partner, W.C. Coup, wrote autobiographies<sup>1</sup> and there is extant a famous letter of acceptance by Barnum of Coup's offer to organize and manage such an undertaking. Coup expressed his desire to have a big, successful show and Barnum admitted that he needed some kind of grand project to take the place of Barnum's Museum, which had burned.

"I was to foot the bills," Barnum wrote and one source<sup>2</sup> says that he raised a considerable sum of money on loans secured by his real estate. The investment was nearly \$500,000 according to a contemporary report.<sup>3</sup> Coup and Dan Castello agreed to frame the show and oversee its operation.

In 1870 Coup and Castello had toured the Great Lakes with Dan Castello's Great Circus and Egyptian Caravan and had netted about \$30,000 out of the effort. During the second half of the season they had contracted for horses and wagons for an overland tour of Wisconsin and it was these assets that formed the basis of the new circus.<sup>4</sup>

The most valuable investment in the enterprise, however, was Barnum's name. Circus historians generally denigrate both his contribution and his

participation in any of the shows that carried his name, but in 1870 Barnum was "famous," he was a "celebrity." In those times when politicians or soldiers were the best-known public figures — and the ideals held up to children — Barnum and one or two others, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Horace Greeley among them, had achieved what today is readily available, notoriety unaccompanied by any real cultural contribution. Barnum had spent a lot of time and money making his name known and the chances of success of a circus bearing it were probably exceeded only by the possibility of Ulysses S. Grant lending his name to a field show.

D.B. Barnes and Harry Buckley had provided forty-two horses for the Coup-Castello circus and these were purchased for the 1871 Barnum show for \$3900. The wagons they had pulled were made by Fish Brothers Wagon Company in Racine. This was a well-known firm in upper midwest in the second half of the nineteenth century. Organized in 1862 under the name Fish & Bull, it became Fish Bros. in 1864. At

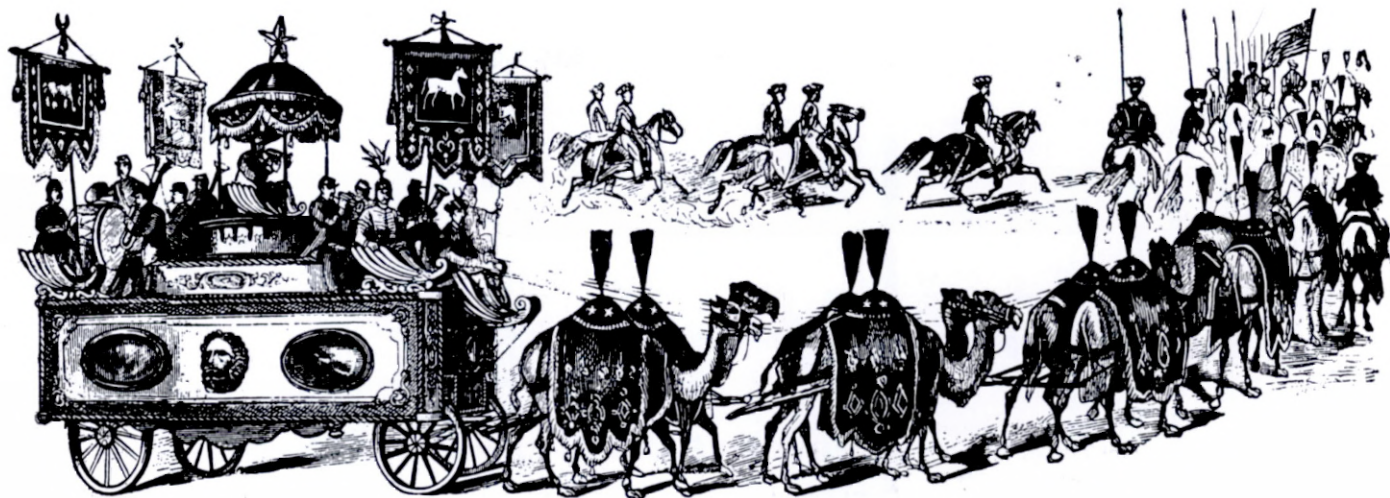
The "Orpheus" bandwagon was used by the Barnum show in 1871 and 1872. This old print shows the wagon being pulled by ten camels as described in the CLIPPER.

the height of its prosperity the firm had 200 employees engaged in the manufacture of buggies and farm wagons. It was in business on State Street until World War I.<sup>5</sup>

The equipment going from Coup-Castello to the Barnum organization was shipped by rail from Delavan to Bridgeport, Connecticut in the spring of 1871 and was carried on ten cars.<sup>6</sup> The forty-two horses and ten railroad flats would seem to indicate about twenty wagons, though it is doubtful that the Castello show needed that many.

In addition to himself as general manager and Castello as equestrian director, Coup hired several Delavan showmen for the season. Ed Beckley (1836-1892) was assistant manager; Luke Tilden (1828-1877) parade supervisor; Washington Smith (1847-1904), six-horse chariot driver; George Madden (1836-1895), clown; Mary Anne Madden (1847-1895), rider and George Sloman (1832-1904), trapeze performer. Others from Delavan were Harry Buckley, George Bushnell, William Smith, Bob Westendorf, Harriet Buckley, Harry Ambler and Frank Delaney.<sup>7</sup>

Other staff people were W.C. Crum, treasurer; J.J. Justice, contracting agent; J.L. Hutchinson, agent for Bar-





num's autobiography and later with the advance; W.L. Jukes, in charge of mechanical figures and Dr. A.C. Berry, veterinary surgeon. There were many others, of course, but these all figured in later seasons with Barnum.

Barnum satisfied himself with appointing the assistant treasurer, his son-in-law, S.H. Hurd. He was there to protect Barnum's interest. George Wood, the New York Museum operator who used Barnum's name, paid the showman 3% of the gross receipts for the privilege. Barnum and Coup had a similar agreement. Coup said that receipts for the season, exclusive of privileges (i.e. concert, candy and sideshow) were \$400,000, so Barnum picked up at least \$12,000 on the agreement, about the same amount he received from Wood in a year. Also, Barnum had sole claim to sales of his autobiography, less the value of the free ticket provided with each. The books were sold for one dollar and fifty cents and J.B. Pond, who managed Barnum on the lecture circuit, said they sold in the tens of thousands and that Barnum paid nine cents for them. Add in the privilege money and one can see that Barnum was handsomely rewarded for his mortgages and the use of his name.

The first public announcement of the formation of Barnum's Circus appeared in the *New York Clipper* on February 2, 1871. A month later the receipt of a shipment of imported animals by steamer was reported. This does not correlate in terms of time with Coup's assertion in the *Baltimore Gazette* in an 1878 interview to the effect that they had telegraphed to Europe for wild animals which were shipped on the *Erie*. They were due in New York in fourteen days from Hamburg (probably from Reiche Brothers), but sixty days elapsed before they learned that she had broke her screw and put into St. Thomas. By then the crew had eaten all the animals except the rhinoceros.

"We, however," Coup was quoted, "arranged to purchase a menagerie that had been travelling over the country sinking (i.e. losing) money, but got animals from Europe instead, there being time."

To oppose both is Barnum's statement in his letter to Coup of October 8, 1870 in which he wrote, "Wood will sell all his animals right." Apparently, Wood would not.

Thus we have two menageries coming from Europe, one of which was eaten by hungry sailors; a domestic menagerie and Wood's animals. Whatever the source, the menagerie was finally put on display with twelve camels (some from Coup and Castello), four lions, he rhinoceros, zebras, two elephants (one large, one small), gnus, yaks, elands, twany and black leopards, kangaroos, white deer, boars, birds and monkeys. In all,

enough beasts to fill thirty cages. A giraffe, purchased abroad, died en route — possibly as lunch — and another was purchased, but we find no proof of its arrival in time for the outdoor season.

The museum attractions were many and show the Barnum hand. Platform acts included Admiral Dot ("smaller than Thumb") a giant, a bearded lady, an armless girl and a sleeping woman. Wax figures and mechanical marvels were carried in wagons in those days and one report credits the show with twenty museum vans.<sup>8</sup> Among these were General Moltke, the victor of 1870; Siamese twins; King William of Germany, again the Franco-Prussian War; a Cardiff giant; Louis Napoleon; a dying zouave; a mechanical trumpet player and a perpetual motion machine. Most of these seem to have come from Wood.

The existence of twenty museum wagons and our previous statement that there were thirty cages may not mean fifty parade units. It could well be that the thirty cages counted by the *New York Clipper* included the twenty museum wagons. The latter, being paraded closed, could easily be mistaken for cages and the animals we listed would fit nicely into ten dens.

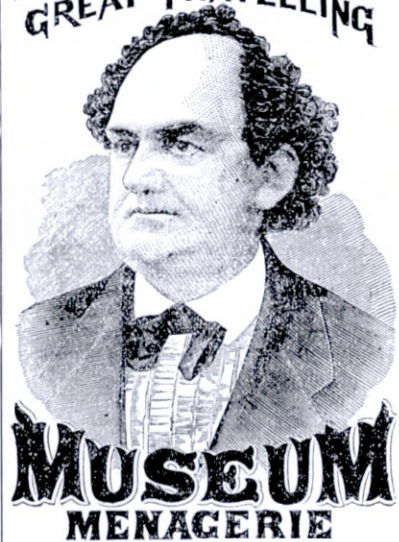
The entire aggregation moved in ninety-five to one hundred wagons<sup>9</sup> pulled by two hundred forty-five horses driven by one hundred seventy-five teamsters. In addition, there were sixty arenic stars and seventy-five other employees. The *New York Times* said it was the largest show of its type ever, and it might well have been true.

Because of the terms of his contract with George Wood, Barnum could not show under his own name in New York City, so the opening date, April 10 to 15, was in Brooklyn. Later, some arrangement was made with Wood about this contractual clause as the Barnum Circus went into the American Institute Building at 63rd Street and 3rd Avenue for the winter.

The Brooklyn lot was a new one on Fulton Avenue between Smith and Hoyt Streets near City Hall. It had replaced the lot at Fulton and DeKalb just the year before. Eighteen seventy-one was the first season in which any show used three tents to separate the menagerie, the museum and the arena.<sup>10</sup> The two circuses that introduced the idea were J.E. Warner's Geat Pacific, out of Lansing, Michigan, and Barnum's.<sup>11</sup> There had been separation of the menagerie for several years because of the growth of that department with the larger shows. Museums, or sideshows, however, had not reached such a size, generally speaking, as to require them to be self-tented. Barnum's big top was much

This newspaper ad was used by the P.T. Barnum show for the July 25, 1871 date in Portland, Maine. Pfening Collection.

## P.T. BARNUM'S GREAT TRAVELLING



### MUSEUM MENAGERIE

Caravan & Hippodrome!

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Will Exhibit at

PORTLAND,

Tuesday, July 25,

Giving THREE EXHIBITIONS—at 10 a. m., 2 and 8 p. m. Doors open one hour earlier.

500 Animals, Birds, Reptiles, Alligators, Crocodiles, Elephants, Camels, Lions, Tigers, Leopards, Bears, Kangaroos, Ostriches, Cassoaries.

The Museum is full of wonders, among which are Mons. GOLIATH, the great French Giant, 8 feet 10 inches high.

Admiral DOT, the California Dwarf, 25 inches high, 13 years old and weighs 15 pounds—four times smaller than Gen. Tom Thumb.

INFANT ESAU, or Bearded Child, little girl five years old—literally covered with Hair, mustache and Side Whiskers.

Miss ANNA LOCKE, the Woman born without arms—sews, stitches, crochets, knits and embroiders with her feet and toes.

Live DIGGER INDIANS from the Yosemite Valley.

Powers's Greek Slave, Siamese Twins, Cardiff Giant, Sleeping Beauty, Last Supper, Dying Zouave—and a thousand other things too numerous to mention.

The Three Immense Tents Cover Nearly Two Acres.

Two Exhibitions daily—Afternoon and Evening.—Doors open at 1 and 7 o'clock, and in Portland and the larger towns, three exhibitions daily, at 10 a. m., 2 and 8 p. m.

ADMISSION to the three Great Shows, only 50 cts. CHILDREN under 9 years, 25 cts. No extra charge to Dan Costello's Great Circus.

The Mammoth Museum, Menagerie and Hippodrome will also exhibit in the following places:

SACO,	July 24	PORTLAND,	July 25
BRUNSWICK,	" 26	GARDINER,	" 27
AUGUSTA,	" 28	WATERVILLE,	" 29
LEWISTON,	" 31		





larger than the other two tents, but we have found no record of its size. Capacity seating eventually amounted to 9,300 people, though it was 5,000 at season's beginning. This was a round top, the seats being set up on the ground for a distance around the ring and bleacher seats being behind them. The chairs on the ground, or some of them, composed the reserve seating, the rest the equivalent of today's blues. There was no crowd control inside the big top, as we shall reveal later, so the people in the rear seats often pushed forward in the aisles the better to see and the people in the chairs stood on their seats. Coup gave this state of affairs credit for the introduction — in 1872 — of two rings.

In addition to the three public tents there were either five or eight horse tents, maybe both, dependent on the lot.<sup>12</sup> Each apparently held about thirty head of baggage stock. The ring stock was boarded daily in livery or hotel stables and on the days of long moves, thirty to forty miles, was shipped by rail.

There was also a dining tent and a wagon fitted up to be a cookhouse. While the staff and performers still stayed in hotels, after the time-honored custom, the working men were provided with beds on the lot. These were in the form of fold-down bunks in the baggage wagons, twelve bunks to the wagon. While this system, feeding and bedding the help on the lot, was more economical than the old way of putting them up in hotels every night, it was also the only solution for a crew the size of Barnum's. There would not be enough hotel rooms in the average town to house almost three hundred people. Coup once stated that he believed that well-rested men worked better so he saw to it that everyone had a bed on the rail show; he evidently believed this by 1871.

"No Saratogas" was a common warning in hiring ads in trade papers in the 1870's and it referred to the refusal by shows to carry trunks for the personnel. If everyone attached to the

The "Revolving Temple of Juno" wagon is shown in a part of a parade litho used in 1871 or 1872. Reproduced from *CIRCUS PARADES*, By C.F. Fox. (Amidon Collection.)

company brought a trunk with them many additional baggage wagons would be required to haul them about. Thus, everyone was limited to satchels of one sort or another for which they had to accept the safety. Coup provided one baggage wagon in which anyone's goods and clothes could be hung and numbered, guarded by a clerk who handed out whatever was requested. It was a check room on wheels.<sup>13</sup>

The canvas crew consisted of twenty-eight men and they could erect the tents in thirty-five minutes. Building the ring and erecting the seats took another forty minutes. The ring was an earthen, banked circle, sloped on the interior side to help give purchase to the horses. It was constructed anew at each stand. Tear-down was measured at twenty-eight minutes. All this dependent, of course, on lot and weather conditions.<sup>14</sup>

In most 1871 stands the Barnum show gave three performances, 11 a.m., 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. There were many times during the season when even these were not enough and the closed ticket wagons would be surrounded by people offering two and three times regular admission for a ticket. There were three ticket wagons in Boston in June and four in Rochester, New York, in September so one may have been added to handle the rush that became commonplace. The net was about \$2500 according to several sources indicating that five thousand people at fifty cents a head would handle expenses. Children were admitted for twenty-five cents. Only the smallest towns could not support the show and only in Maine were such towns encountered.

It is doubtful that any previous street parade was as grand as the one presented by P.T. Barnum's Circus in 1871. The thirty wagons (menagerie and museum) that we mentioned above

were all new since Coup-Castello had none. These were highly varnished and some had mechanical figures, their movements geared to the wagon axles, which caught the attention of most observers. One in particular had a large rosebud atop it which opened as the wagon moved, revealing a statue of cupid. These were of American manufacture, according to the *Clipper*, but we do not yet know who made them. There is also a reference to six royal chariots mounted with golden lions, elephants and tigers. We do not know if these were actually chariots of the two-wheeled variety, or if they were wagons decorated with wood carvings.

The two important vehicles in the parade are also still mysteries to us, insofar as their origin is concerned. The first of these is the "Chariot of Orpheus," a name used here with some caution. During the 1870 season the Dan Castello Circus acquired a new bandwagon about September 26 in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. It may well have been this wagon. Where it came from and who built it are not known and the Castello show did not advertise it. We know of its existence from editorial comment. If it did not come from the Castello troupe to Barnum then it must have been built for the 1871 show. It was the only bandwagon in the Barnum parade and was pulled by a team of camels, just as the Coup-Castello one was. Its presence is confirmed by heralds, posters and newspaper accounts. The one clue mitigating against it having been with Castello is the advertisement placed by Coup in the *Clipper* on December 9, 1871 offering a bandwagon for sale. Since our subject vehicle was still on the show in 1872 we wonder if he was selling the Coup-Castello chariot, in other words a different vehicle.

The Exeter, New Hampshire *News-Letter* of July 14 says "the second and less pretentious chariot was drawn by eight horses and several camels." The *Rochester Daily Union* of September 19 puts them at twelve horses and ten camels. The *Clipper* of April 15 refers



to ten camels. It is possible that hilly parade routes led to the use of horses in addition to camels.

The *Clipper* called it the "Car of the Muses," which fits its role as bandwagon. It was twelve feet long and eight feet wide with oval mirrors, two to a side, with a carved animal head between them. A knight in armor sat in each corner of the wagon and the band sat in the middle, facing out in all four directions. We suspect that this vehicle was rebuilt for the 1872 season as we cannot believe that an eight-foot wide body could be carried on the small flatcars of that era. There is no record of the wagon after 1872.

The second, and best known, of these parade vehicles was the "Revolving Temple of Juno." This appears to be an English-made wagon. The *Clipper*, says so, Barnum says so and its appearance suggests it. It was surmounted by a throne over which a suspended canopy could, when the wagon body was fully extended, reach at least thirty feet in the air (advertising claimed forty feet). There are references to men with poles being on the wagon to lift telegraph wires out of the way, but in those days wires might sag to within fifteen feet of the street. The throne revolved through a gear arrangement with the axles. In parade a pretty lady dressed like a queen sat on the throne. It appears that there were two telescoping sections, the larger being mounted with mirrors ten feet long and five feet wide divided into four plates. Inside this was a smaller section upon which the throne was mounted. Some illustrations show two, some three sections vertically. The lowest section, the bed of the wagon, was heavily carved and it is this work that appears to be that of English carriage makers rather than of American shipcarvers. Its mass and intricacy was never equalled in American work, probably because of the cost. Often titled the Car of Neptune, this wagon has given rise much speculation concerning its history. At the present state of information it seems that the throne was removed and a great statue of Neptune driving several horses substituted, possibly in 1880. It burned in a fire in winter quarters in 1887.

The rest of the parade consisted of the two elephants, one of them named Gipsy (sic), and an array of mounted people. While it was a good one, the Barnum parade was no larger, at least on paper, than those of Adam Forepaugh or the Van Amburgh Menagerie. The majority of shows, however, were content to confine their parading to the passage of their bandwagon.

J.J. Justice was the manager of the advance and his minions distributed such verbiage as "the largest and most attractive of exhibitions on earth" and "one hundred thousand curiosities."



The Infant Esau, or Bearded Child, was really Annie Jones, born in Marion, Virginia in 1866. She appeared with the Barnum show for a number of years. This cut is from a courier issued by the show. Pfening Collection.

Perhaps the most interesting notice they distributed was the one that read:

This Great Moral Exhibition is visited by eminent divines and by the best and most refined members of Society everywhere. No person need visit the Equestrian Performance

Admiral Dot, The California Dwarf, was born in San Francisco in 1858. The courier from which this cut was taken advised that he was 25" high and weighed 15 pounds. Pfening Collection.



unless they choose to do so.

Moral opposition to circuses still existed in rural and small town America in enough force to call for such messages. However, a visit to the museum and menagerie were considered educational and for those who did not want to see women in tights or hear the blasphemy of clowns there was still reason to purchase a ticket.

The arena performance, at this distance, does not appear to have been superior to that offered by competitors of Barnum, yet it was by no means inferior, either. It began with one of the early spectacles, "The Halt in the Desert," a title Coup and Castello had used in 1870 and possibly with the same costumes. For some reason it included twenty men in mail armor, perhaps intended to be Roman soldiers.

The rest of the program went as follows:

Dan Castello and Senator, a trained horse he had introduced on the 1870 show.

Leon Brothers (J.T. and Bert), acrobats.

Wild Arabs, one of the early arab acrobatic troupes.

Professor and Madame Bushnell, juggling and impalement.

James Melville, bareback act.

Master Dave Castello, adopted son of the equestrian manager, in a bareback somersault act.

Jerry Hopper, stilt act.

Tumbling by the whole company.

French Battoute act, the leapers.

Mlle. Vinnie Cook, equestrienne.

Freely Brothers, trapeze performers.

Dunbar and Donaldson, perch act.

Mlle. Angela, the female Sampson.

Mr. Messenger, juggling cannonballs.

Messrs. Dunbar, Donaldson, Antonio and Batchellor, ladder balancing.

Alexis, the riding goat. This animal jumped banners, went through hoops, mounted and dismounted just like a human rider.

Master Alex Melville, child hurdle rider.

Gipsy, the elephant, presented by Charles White.

George North and Dave Castello, scenic riders.

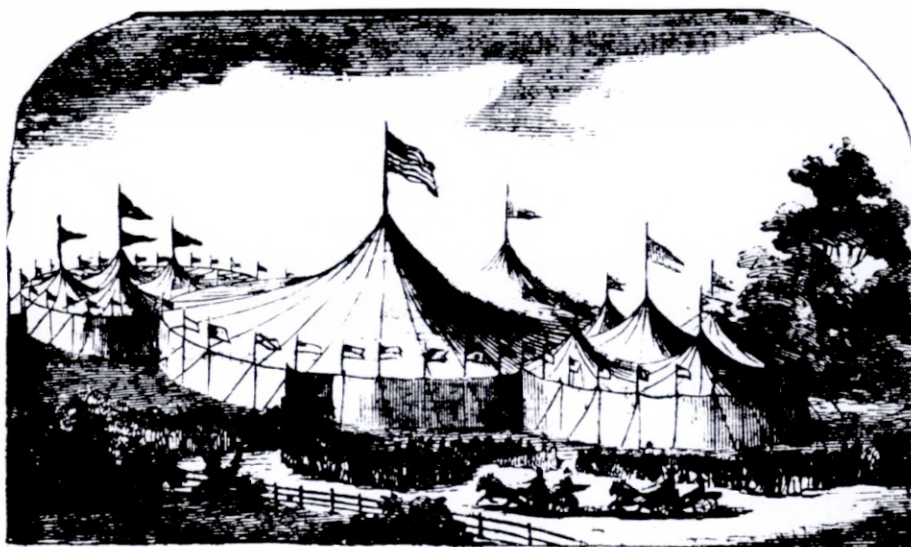
Francis and George Melville, somersault act.

Mlle. and Mr. Nelson, scenic riders. Monte Verda, contortionist.

In addition the clowns, who appeared with instead of between turns in those days, were Messrs. Aymar, Bliss, Dunbar, Donaldson, Batchellor and Dave Castello.

From Brooklyn the route led to New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine and New York State. At Waterville, Maine they turned back because the small towns weren't able to support such a large show; it must have been here that Coup began





wondering how to avoid small towns. They went west to Buffalo along the Erie Canal and returned to the Hudson by the Elmira-Binghamton path so many shows have trod. They closed in Harlem on October 28 and then opened in the American Institute Building on November 12 for a winter show that closed January 6.

Attendance was high, as we said, and some examples are fifteen thousand at three shows in Portland, Maine; eight thousand at one show in Albany; nine thousand at one performance in Rochester, New York. The Auburn, New York newspaper said that twenty thousand people came to town on show day. The city fathers of Waterville, Maine somehow guessed there'd be a crowd and erected a tent for those who came from such a distance that they had to sleep in town.

On April 23 in Morristown, New Jersey the show purchased four black Spanish mules which they hitched to the cookhouse wagon; Theodore Conklin of Delavan, the teamster. The next day the wagon, bringing up the rear of the column, was struck at a grade crossing in Cranford. Bystanders, some of whom yelled to Conklin that the train was coming, said that the mules became unmanageable at the sound of the train and could not be turned from the tracks. The train struck the wheel team and demolished the wagon, the lead team being unhurt. Conklin was killed as was the cook, a black man named Edward Dyer. Tommy Welsh, an employee riding on the wagon, was so badly injured he died in a few days.

At a coroner's inquest held immediately after the accident it was determined that Conklin was thrown fifty feet through the air to land on his head. He died of a broken neck. The engineer was bruised by flying debris and there was blood — from the mules — all along the smoking car, which in those days was just behind the tender.

This illustration from the 1871 Barnum courier shows the three tents used by the Barnum show. A photo taken in 1872, however, shows the tents as having two center poles and a middle piece, with the big top having two rows of quarter poles. Pfening Collection.

The injured were placed on another train, at Barnum's orders, and taken to Bellevue Hospital in New York. It was there that Walsh died. The coroner's jury found no liability could be imputed to the railroad, the Central of New Jersey.<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to today's folk belief that "the show must go on," is the editorial comment in the Elizabeth newspaper that "the heartlessness of circus men was shown on Thursday in this town. After three of their number had been killed and others seriously wounded by the railroad accident, they went through their buffoon exhibitions the same afternoon and evening as though nothing had occurred."

Also, in Elizabeth, on the 27th of April, despite the warnings of a flagman a herd of ponies and mules from the circus crossed the tracks as a train was approaching. The engineer was able to stop before striking them. The disregard of danger at railroad crossings in those days is obvious to anyone reading the newspapers of the time. In city after city grade crossings had to be abolished because of the numerous accidents.

In Boston the *Transcript* was taken with Barnum's parade. The revidreads: (The parade) culminated in the most magnificent chariot which ever passed through our streets ... a remarkable production composed of gilt and glass. Its height is no less surprising than its brilliancy and at its greatest altitude a lady was seated viewing with unconcern the doings of the world below. The second and less pretentious chariot was

drawn by eight horses and several camels which, as they passed, the *Transcript* office, scented the contents of the Frog Pond and left for that oasis without reference to the continuity of the procession. They went with a considerable vengeance for a short time, but were brought back into the traces.<sup>16</sup>

The circus was in Boston a week, from the 12th to the 17th of June. They continued north and by July 19 were in Manchester, New Hampshire. The *Daily Union* took the troupe to task, saying that the circus was very badly managed. There were not enough seats so the ring performance could be seen by only half the people present and, in addition, it was very dusty in the tent. The menagerie was pronounced excellent and the wax figures supremely ridiculous, but the parade was said to be very long and splendid. Twelve thousand spectators attended the three shows there.<sup>17</sup>

The *Portsmouth Journal*, in advance of the July 21 date, printed the comments of the Reverend G.H. Emerson which had appeared in the New York *Christian Leader* and they were:

... the success which everywhere attends Barnum's great show ought to be evidence to the managers who furnish amusement to the public that profanity and indecency of speech and gesture — all of which Mr. Barnum excludes by promptly and indignantly discharging the offender — are not of the nature of supply meeting a popular demand.

However, despite the minister's statement the giant, Monsieur Goliath, got into an imbroglio with one Waldron, a milkman in Dover, New Hampshire on July 22 and was fined twenty dollars by the local magistrate. This man was advertised as being over eight feet tall and must have been quite an adversary for the milkman.<sup>18</sup>

They went to Portland, Maine where the editor of the *Daily Press* said that the street show was more like the traditional caravan displays of a quarter century ago than any he had seen for a long time. He must have been referring to the menagerie parades of the fifties in which long lines of cages were a feature. The first tent (the museum) reminded him of the old American Museum with its curiosities, statuary, wax and mechanical figures. This, of course, was just what Barnum intended. Interestingly, the editor complained that the tickets had been announced as going on sale at 9:00 a.m., but that forty minutes was consumed in the selling of Barnum's autobiography before the ticket wagons opened.<sup>19</sup>



There was another accident involving a train in Augusta, Maine as the caravan left on the morning of July 29 for their stand in Waterville. At 3:30 a.m. a team descending Winthrop Hill took fright at a train which was crossing the road and dashed toward it. The teamster managed to turn them aside before they struck the cars, but the wagon overturned. A Mr. Summerfield, a member of the staff, riding in the wagon received a broken arm and the giant, Monsieur Goliath, was so bruised that he missed several days of work.<sup>20</sup>

In Waterville, the town we reported as providing tents for the rural showgoers, many arrived from as far away as seventy-five miles (the circus billed a radius of fifty to seventy-five miles). All morning on the 29th crowds poured in by carriage, wagon, ox cart and afoot. The sale of liquor was banned for the day and the city put out barrels of ice-water for public use. Just as the morning performance was ending two full excursion trains arrived, one of twenty-seven cars from Bangor (where the circus had decided not to show) and another of seventeen cars from Belfast. It was announced that a continuous performance would be given so that all could be accommodated and the tear-down came at 9:00 p.m.<sup>21</sup>

It was at this point that the route was changed and the caravan headed west into New Hampshire, playing Lewiston, Maine on the way. Here the first, and only reported "clem" of the season took place. According to local reports it began when one of the circus employees for no apparent reason knocked an elderly man to the ground and taking out a knife, threatened to cause him more harm. The man's sons took him away and rounded up a few friends who proceeded to shower rocks at the departing show. They claimed to have staved in the side of one wagon and badly used the grand chariot in the course of the night, in the words of the newspaper.<sup>22</sup>

In Albany, which they played on August 22, Barnum's crew saw their first "day and date". Dan Rice's Paris Pavilion Circus played a four day engagement, from the 21st through the 24th. The Albany Argus reporter was quite taken with Rice's pavilion — this was the wooden, collapsible structure he was hauling about the country that year. If we are to believe that gentleman Rice carried the day though Barnum attracted 8,000 souls despite wet weather, muddy grounds and a lot outside the city.<sup>23</sup>

For the rest of the season, a swing through New York State, little is found in newspaper reports beyond the usual compliments. It was one of the most successful seasons a circus had had in America to that time. It cannot be doubted that it was Barnum's name

that brought the crowds those miles into town on circus day, but once there, what a magnificent thing they saw. The tents and horses and wagons and people were in profusion such as no circus had theretofore displayed. The parade was as fine a one as any offered, the museum and menagerie departments were perhaps the best that could be viewed in that year. The only weakness in the whole presentation was the lack of crowd control in the arena. It must have been serious because so many comments were made about it.

A Connecticut newspaper editor, James M. Bailey, of the Danbury News wrote a humorous piece about his experiences in visiting the Barnum show in 1871 and part of it read:

When I got inside the large tent I was surprised. A sea of faces spread out before me. The tier seats were crowded, the ring seats were crowded, gangways were crowded. It was a mass of suffocation, fun and sweat. I really enjoyed the sight. Here, embraced in an area of a few hundred yards, might be observed —

"Why don't that bald-headed reptile set down?" cried a coarse voice behind me. I looked around. A red-faced illiterate man was glowering down upon me from a tier seat. I cast a sorrowful glance upon him and sat down. There were fifty or sixty people between me and the ring. I had not made any calculation for this when I came, and so I didn't appreciate it. Occasionally somebody hollered, "Down in front." I had an excellent view of the tent. I knew there was something going on in the ring, but if I had been prostrated on my dying couch I could not have told what it was. But I knew whenever a different act commenced, because the people in front of me stood up on the seats, and the folks behind me put their children on my head, and their umbrellas down my back, and remarked audibly to each other, "Was there ever anything like it?" And I, staring idiotically into the back of the man in front of me, fervently hoped there was not.

But all things have an end, and the dreary afternoon performance was not an exception. The last act was performed, the clown finally convulsed the audience, the children in the rear were pulled out of my hair, and I was permitted to fall over, roll around and eventually get on



Picture cards were used by circuses in the 1870s as advertising; this one of a sea lion was used by the Barnum show in 1871. Pfening Collection.

my feet. With the crowd gone, I stole back to the tent and took one fond piercing glance at what I had not yet seen — the ring.<sup>24</sup>

The solution to this — the introduction of the two ring arena — in 1872 was the way in which that season improved upon 1871. Whether the adoption of railway travel in the same year was an improvement for the public remains to be seen. Of the principals, certainly Coup and Castello were pleased with the season and Barnum — at least in his autobiography — was elated. Not only had he made a lot of money, but his name had been spread again over the whole northeast, and one can almost say with certainty that that was, to him, the greatest reward.

1. P.T. Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs* (Buffalo, 1871); W.C. Coup, *Sawdust and Spangles* (Chicago, 1901).
2. *Struggles and Triumphs*, pg. 852 in the 1872 edition.
3. *New York Tribune*, August 19, 1871.
4. Stuart Thayer, "Prelude to Barnum: The Coup and Castello Circus of 1870," *Bandwagon*, XV, 2, pg. 18.
5. Pat Dunn in *Racine Journal-Times*, June 23, 1953.
6. W. Gordon Yaden, "Barnum," *White Tops*, XLIII, 2, pg. 23.
7. Delavan, *Wisconsin Circus Historical Souvenir Magazine*, (n.p., 1970) There are some discrepancies between this source and the 1871 Barnum Courier. I have used the Courier as definitive.
8. J. Fred Crosby, *Billboard*, January 21, 1922.
9. The *New York Clipper*, gave the figure ninety-five, the *New York Times* one hundred.
10. In 1857 Yankee Robinson featured four tents, but did not divide his museum and arena.
11. Stuart Thayer, "Joseph E. Warner: Pioneer of the Three Tent Circus," *Bandwagon*, XIV, 1, pg. 20.
12. The *Portsmouth Journal* reports five, the *Boston Journal*, eight.
13. *Boston Journal* quoted in *Struggles and Triumphs*, pg. 859 in the 1872 edition.
14. *Portland Journal*, July 29, 1871.
15. *New Jersey Journal* (Elizabeth), May 2, 1871.
16. Quoted in Exeter, *New Hampshire News-Letter*, July 14, 1871.
17. *Manchester Daily Union*, July 20, 1871.
18. *Dover Inquirer*, July 27, 1871.
19. *Portland Daily Press*, July 26, 1871.
20. *Struggles and Triumphs*, pg. 860 in the 1872 edition.
21. *ibid.*
22. *Lewiston Weekly Journal*, August 3, 1871.
23. *Albany Argus*, August 23, 1871.
24. James M. Bailey, *Life in Danbury* (Boston, 1873), pg. 60.



# They Walk Above The Crowd

## High-wire History On Ringling-Barnum

By Greg Parkinson

The year 1977 will mark the 50th season since the Wallendas first appeared with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey and began the modern era of high-wire acts. These acts have come from diverse corners of the world: Germany, Columbia, Great Britain, Italy, the United States of America, Bulgaria, France, Switzerland, Austria, and Sweden. In that half century of unbelievable courage and death defiance, no one has ever been killed on the show. Producers of the "Greatest Show On Earth" have been successful in hiring stars whose superlative skills and innovative routines have been unmatched. Certainly the show's prestige has contributed to their fame. Nevertheless, a review of the performers who have worked for the "Combine" will encompass the historic highlights of high-wire acts in general.

What is a high-wire act? It is obviously not a tight wire or slack wire act, because they are low, not high. Technically, it is not a standard "slide for life" or a modern motor cycle act. It is a dangerous bit of trickery performed on a length of steel cable, usually 5/8" to 7/8" in diameter, tightened between two elevated platforms which are mounted on poles 25 feet or higher. These acts are not new to the 20th century or the United States, but their predominance coincides with the period of American circus history beginning shortly after the combination which created Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey.

No high-wire acts were with Ringling between 1919 and 1928. Although some pieces of advertising seem to indicate otherwise, most of the roaring 20's saw the likes of Con Colleano, Berta Beeson, Bird Millman, and others who worked their miracles too close to the ground to classify them as high-wire walkers. But on April 5, 1928 in Madison Square Garden, four young Germans made circus history as they stepped onto the high-wire. They were to become the most famous name in their field, Wallenda.

The Wallenda family's involvement in show business extends back many generations, but Karl Wallenda was the first architect of a troupe of high-wire performers. He grew up in what is today part of East Germany and spent many a night performing handstand tricks in cabarets and bars in

This snapshot was taken of the Wallendas shortly after they arrived on Ringling Barnum for the 1928 season. From left to right: Karl, Helen, Herman and Joe Geiger. Pfening Collection.

Magdeburg, asking for remuneration to support his mother. Karl's first actual trouping was with his stepfather, George Grotefent, on the "Grotefent Cavalcade of Musical Stars." In 1921, Karl answered an advertisement for someone for an aerial act to do handstands. Little did he know that this meant performing with Louis Weitzmann and the start of a career on the high-wire. By 1924 Karl had put together his own troupe consisting of himself, brother Herman Wallenda, Lena Schmidt, and Joseph Geiger. That season on Circus Gleich, the three-high pyramid was first performed.

During the winter of 1925 and 1926, Karl got some good bookings with Circus Busch in the big German cities of Hamburg, Berlin, Essen, and Breslau. But the engagements were placed in jeopardy when top-mounter Lena, quit. Wallenda placed an ad in "Das Artist". It was answered by 16 year old, Helen Kreis. Shortly thereafter, John Ringling inspected the Great Wallendas in Havana, Cuba. He offered them a secure job in America, and booked them for 1928.

The first performance in Madison Square Garden was indeed a showstopper. For the finale, the Wallendas saved the three-high. Joe and Herman walked out on the wire 40 feet high, linked by a pole yoked to fit over their shoulders. On this, Karl balanced carrying Helen on his shoulders. Midway across, Helen raised to her feet and extended her tenuous body to a height of nearly 55 feet above the floor. The audience roared its thunderous approval, but somehow the Wallendas, who did not speak English, thought they had failed to please and were being mocked by the loud cheers and standing ovation. Fred Bradna, Ringling's Equestrian Director, soon convinced them that they were a smash hit. The Great Wallendas were overwhelmed for 15 minutes with applause.

The Wallendas were paid \$205 each week to risk their lives doing the three-high. Also they performed a chair

The Wallendas are pictured here while on the Ringling Barnum Circus in 1936. Atwell Photo.



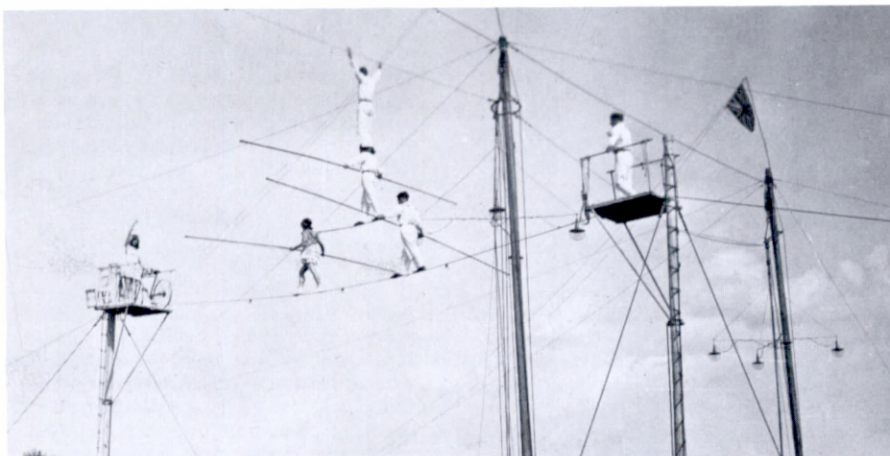


stand, bicycle crossing, and Karl did a head stand. In 1929 they added a three-high verticle formation on a bicycle. But that season they had to share the applause with the Rellmuths, the German troupe Otto Gretona infiltrated (later called the Gretonas). This act was very similar to the Wallendas and John Ringling had hired them so that both ends of the tent could display a high-wire sensation. This arrangement lasted only one season and Karl was offered the opportunity to develop a second troupe for 1930. New family members gathered in Berlin and the Grotefents were born at a winter engagement at the Wintergarden.

Throughout the 1930's the Wallendas continued to play winter dates at the Wintergarden giving substance to the description in the Ringling program "intrepid performers whose thrilling exploits have made two continents gasp." Adolph Hitler was just one of many well known Europeans in attendance. In February 1931 on Friday the 13th word was received at the Wintergarden stand of Lillian Leitzel's fatal fall in Copenhagen. Alfredo Codona was at the Wintergarden too and all the Wallendas witnessed his agony. Later years would bring experiences which would cause the Wallendas similar grief.

The 1930 Grotefents were made up of George Grotefent, Arthur Grotefent (Karl's half brother), Herman's wife, Lucile Wallenda, Phillip Kreis (Helen's brother), and Willie Wallenda (Karl's brother). They complimented the Wallendas for two seasons doing similar pyramids and bicycle stunts. In 1932 however, the Grotefents were gone and in Washington, D.C. as the canvas season opened. The Hustrei, another German act, was listed on the program. For the Golden Jubilee the Gretonnas who had appeared intermittently with other Ringling owned circuses were the second troupe part of the season. In 1934 it was another Wallenda supplement, the Karl Troupe.

Willie Wallenda was the first of the Wallenda family to be killed while performing. In Goteburg, Sweden, his bicycle was blown off the high-wire while he alone worked an outdoor winter date. He bounced out of the narrow high strung net and fell to his death. If, as in this case, a performer's balance is lost while on a bicycle, it is nearly impossible to catch the wire and prevent a fall because the bicycle blocks the wire at precisely the moment that it must be recovered. This is one reason why it was extra remarkable when the Wallendas put bicycles under the three-high pyramid for the 1934 season. The trick was even more spine-chilling since Karl had added a wobbly chair underneath himself. In Akron, Ohio the cable sagged during the Wallendas' act and the bicycle pyramid collapsed. Fate was



In 1929 a second high wire act was added on Ringling Barnum with the arrival of the Great Gretona's. They were sent to the Barnes show in 1930 and 1931 and to Sells-Floto in 1932. The

Gretona group was back on Ringling Barnum for at least part of the 1933 season, as well as again in 1935. This outdoor view of the Gretonas was taken in 1930. Pfening Collection.

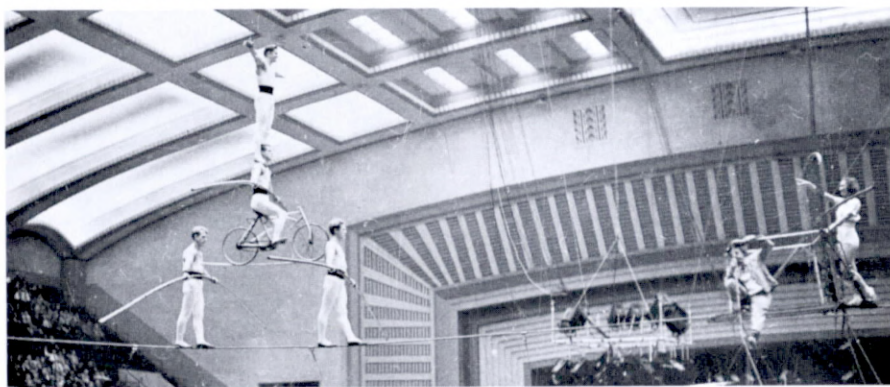
on their side this time as all four Wallendas were saved by miraculously catching the wire and each other.

On July 18, 1935 Karl married his top-mounter of seven years, Helen Kries. That same year the four Wallendas and five Grotefents received \$350 and \$210 per week respectfully for their skills.

Tragedy was narrowly averted on June 29, 1937. Rain and mud had engulfed the lot at Schenectady, New York, weakening all the stakes that held the dead men and the guy-lines. Curly Lill decided to double the number of property men used to grip the Wallendas' hand-held net. Once on the wire, the Wallendas decided to omit the bicycles from the act. As they walked out with their triangle of people, poles, bars, and chair, the wire gave way. Herman, Joe, and Karl fell into the net. Helen was deflected into the net by Lill when she fell toward him. All were hurt, but none seriously. The Wallendas were back at it the next day.

Labor and financial difficulties in

The Hustrei Troupe, headed by 52 year old August A. Hustrei, came to America for the 1932 season of the Ringling Barnum show. They are shown here on an indoor date. Pfening Collection.



1938 caused the Ringling management to feel it advisable to cut back. Thus in 1939 and 1940 only one high-wire artist trouped with the show. The Great Arturo was actually Austrian, Arturo Trostl, a performer who the Wallendas had helped train and who had been with them since 1936. The Great Arturo's act was punctuated by his crossing the high-wire enclosed in a black sack.

There was no high-wire performer on the program in 1941. But, John Ringling North instructed Pat Valdo to re-engage the entire Wallenda family for the following season. Two years later they were just beginning their routine when the Big Top caught fire in Hartford. Although the Circus suffered great injury through liability suits as well as physical damage, the Wallendas weathered the disaster unharmed. They remained headliners through 1946. After leaving Ringling the Wallendas went up literally to new heights. In 1947 Karl first introduced the seven person pyramid and later during outdoor practice sessions in Sarasota, Florida, an astounding eight person, four-high pyramid. Much national publicity resulted from the terrible fall in Detroit in 1962 and Karl's Tallulah Falls Gorge crossing





The Great Arturo (Trosti) a Wallenda graduate, appeared with RB in 1939 and 1940. Pfening Collection.

in 1970. But it was 16 seasons with Ringling-Barnum that gave the Great Wallendas their initial fame if not their lasting place in circus history.

Harold Davis was the son of a British coal miner. At age 15 he followed his father into the Maltby and Thurstcroft mines near Sheffield, England. From before dawn until after dark, young Davis endured the hardships of coal mining along with the hardships of the world wide depression. Once he was trapped by a cave-in 2,000 feet below the surface. He was soon rescued, unharmed, but he did not forget the experience.

Charles Davis acquainted his son with the fun and fresh air of athletics and acrobatics. Together they worked up their own tumbling act. Harold taught himself to walk a rope strung between two chairs in his backyard. Later he elevated his act and he added high-wire walking to his repertoire of circus talents. Before long he was getting money for public performances. Sisters Elsie and Hilda were coaxed into the act. In 1939, Harold lured a neighborhood girl friend to ride on his shoulders while he walked 50 feet above Edenbridge in Kent. Two years later, Minnie adopted the high-wire as a way of life and married Harold.

By using the letter z to join Harold's nickname Al with Elsie's middle name Annie, they created the stage name that became a Ringling feature for twelve years. It was Alzana. The first circus that Alzana worked for was the Blackpool Tower Circus. This was a

new way of life for Harold Davis. Never again did he "waste his life" in the dark depths of coal mines, for he had discovered the lights of the circus.

On the strength of a backyard audition, Hans Lederer signed the Alzanas family on behalf of John Ringling North for 1947. Their act was full of treachery and novelty. Alzana fought his way up a 45° incline wire. Elkskin boots aided in gripping the wire while Alzana controlled his equilibrium with his insteps and flaying arms. He danced a fast Charleston type step across the 5/8" cable. He did cartwheels, then slowed while on his hands and executed a one arm hand stand. Then the other hand lowered to grip the wire and he began to revolve around the high-wire with several "giant swings". Whether it was hopping on one leg, a chair stand at mid-wire, or skipping rope, the Great Alzana worked a fast paced act.

The wheelbarrow trick involved the whole family. Harold walked out with the aid of a balance pole with Hilda positioned on his shoulders. Elsie held Alzana around the waist with her legs while pushing a wheel over the wire. From the axle of the wheel hung a trapeze where Minnie acted as a counter weight while doing a bird's nest. The bicycle trick was a real crowd pleaser. Harold rode out with Hilda sitting on his shoulders and Minnie and Elsie posing on trapezes rigged below the bicycle. Four people's weight on one bicycle, balanced high in the air, with no net below!

Alzana, "the most daredevilish human ever to skirt eternity's brink", often slipped when he attempted the spectacular forward and backward leap over the doubled up jump rope. Only about ten inches of rope spanned

In 1947 the Great Alzanas high wire group came from England to join Ringling Barnum. They are left to right: Tommy, Elsie, Harold, Minnie, Charles (papa) and Hilda, in a 1947 photo. Burt Wilson Collection.



between his hands. Every time Alzana missed this trick he repeated the attempt until he succeeded. Each time the audience became more tense. Alzana seemed to enjoy the danger. No guy wires were attached to his main cable because in his opinion it made the crowd more nervous when the cable vibrated more (also the trapezes could not pass through them). It became difficult even for other Ringling personnel to detect the real mis-cues of Alzana because he often threw intentional slips just to sell the act.

Not all performing was merely flirting with danger. The first year with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, Alzana reached for a rope hanging beside the pedestal in Marion, Ohio, only to find it loose. He fell directly to the ground, broke both heel bones, and missed six weeks of the canvas season. On the last day of the same season in Miami, another rope proved hazardous. While crossing with the three girls on the bicycle, Harold's balance pole was tangled by a rope that a property man had "let in" too soon. Elsie and Minnie were safe on the trapezes; Hilda and Harold plunged together. They both fractured their spines and were only saved from a worse fate by having their fall broken by their father, Charles Davis, who regularly acted as their "lifeguard".

In 1952 the Alzanas were replaced by the Camillo Mayer troupe who spent two seasons with Ringling's canvas city. Camillo Mayer was a renown German high-wire performer. On Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey to make his act unique, he boiled a pot of coffee on the wire and also directed an unusual chair stand. The chair lay horizontally on the high-wire. On its back stood two high, two members of the troupe while a third accomplished a hand stand on the front legs of the chair.

In 1954 and 1955 Josephine Berosini graced the dome of the Ringling Big Top with her solo high-wire act. Like





Harold Davis Alzana is pictured here with his sisters in a well remembered part of their act. Pfening Collection.

Harold Alzana, she walked up and down the inclined wire. Hers was at a right angle to her high-wire and was wrapped with adhesive tape for extra traction. Even though she did not present any circus firsts, Berosini performed a captivating routine riding a bicycle, delicately laying on the wire, and standing on a chair. An interesting note is that Josephine Berosini was the great granddaughter of the 19th century high-wire sensation, Charles Blondin. Blondin was the Frenchman who illustriously crossed Niagara Falls several times and on August 19, 1859 carried his terror stricken agent, Henry Colcord, 160 feet high across the roaring Falls.

Alzana returned to Ringling to be featured during the last season under canvas. Two years later on April 1, 1958 in New York, exhausted from an extra long performance, ligaments in his knee gave out as he began his descent. He hit the wire on his back, spun around and dropped through space. He landed on rigger Bob Russell, his new lifeguard. This human safety device allowed Alzana to walk out with only a broken wrist. In Miami in 1960, Harold fell 40 feet after missing the backward rope leap. Again he crashed into Bob Russell; this time it was only three ribs and his collar bone. When Ringling opened in New York a short time later, Art Concello insisted that "accident prone" Alzana work over a net. Alzana ob-

jected saying that the paying customers would be deprived of suspense. He also felt that nets invited falls. "The net's there, so you don't go for the cable so fast." He was probably right, but the net saved him two weeks later. Alzana stayed with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey through 1962.

Manfred Fritsch was contracted as Doval the Great by Ringling executives for 1964 and 1965. Fritsch came to America from Germany with the Camillo Mayer troupe. He presented a daring, dashing, spine-chilling act very similar to that of his predecessor, Alzana. But he added something new. He walked the high-wire on stilts. In 1966 Fritsch began service in the navy and once again the "Big One" was without a high-wire act, an act that had been a mainstay, like elephants and clowns, since 1928.

When Hofheinz-Feld bought Ringling in November 1967, the situation with respect to high-wire acts had not changed. Producer Irvin Feld set out to fill the void. He searched Europe and Latin America for fresh exciting talent to build a second traveling show referred to as the Blue Unit. Among the acts found for the 1969 show were Pio Nock & Company, the Lindstroms, and once again Doval the Great. The Lindstroms held a two year contract and worked on the Red Unit. One

Camillo Mayer and his group of German high wire walkers came to the United States and the Big Show in 1952 and remained for the following season. He is shown here making his coffee. Pfening Collection.



The Berosini wire act appeared with Polack Bros. in the late 1940s. In 1954 Josephine Berosini presented a solo act on Ringling Barnum and remained the next year. Pfening Collection.

strong point of this Swedish act was a handstand on a unicycle counter balanced by two girls on trapezes, all suspended from the unicycle in a downward column. Pio Nock had been a star with Circus Knie in Switzerland. Using the approach of a stumbling clown who forced his way into the act, Pio Nock reversed his role and subsequently proved to the spectators that he was a master of the high-wire (a role reminiscent of riders Lucio Cristiani and Poodles Hanneford). Pio Nock spent six years working for Mr. Feld. In 1974 for added drama he performed his clowning over Wolfgang Holtzmeir's cage full of snarling male lions. Not part of the act was falling into the "den of fury", but it did happen.

During the late 1950's and early 1960's two tented shows, namely Cristiani Bros. and Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. were claiming that they were the "World's Largest Circus". With names like Zacchini, Cristiani, Clyde Beatty, Con Colleano, Gaona, and Carla Wallenda, one had to be impressed. But equally impressive was a high-wire act that appeared with Clyde Beatty Circus in 1957 billed as Forsietz-Mendez. In 1959 the two were briefly on Cristiani as Sietz-Mendez. Gene Mendez, a student of Karl Wallenda, was an outstanding artist who performed with daredevilish abandon. Joe Seitz, another Wallenda trainee, was the understander of the duo. Mendez

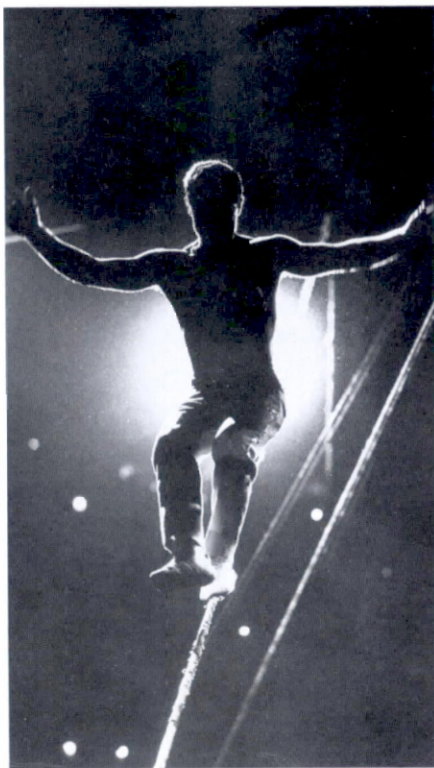


regularly performed a leap from the shoulders of Seitz to the high-wire, a trick nearly comparable in danger to a backward somersault. Irvin Feld saw distinction in this act so he engaged them under the reversed name of Mendez-Seitz for Ringling Blue in 1971 and 1972.

Instead of no high-wire act on the bill, like when Feld took over production, the Ringling Circuses boasted of five great high-wire names in 1972: Pio Nock, Doval, Mendez, Seitz, and a dynamic troupe from behind the Iron Curtain, the Penchevi. All circus enthusiasts and viewers of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus World's IMAX film will recall the Penchevi's somersault from the high-wire teetorboard to the three-high. Mechanics were used to reduce the risk of this act.

On August 7, 1974 New Yorkers of all walks of life stopped in their tracks and stared in disbelief at a man on a wire 1,350 feet high, rigged between the new World Trade Towers. All three television networks brought the news of the event into the homes of every American on the evening news. The Frenchman who made several aerial strolls 131 feet between the twin giants was Philippe Petit known as "Le Funambule" on the Paris streets where he first started rope dancing and juggling for the sidewalk audiences. Irvin and Ken Feld realized that they could capitalize on Petit's instant fame so

Doval the Great (Manfred Fritsch) appeared with the Greatest Show on Earth in 1964 and 1965. Ringling Barnum Photo.



Gene Mendez and Joe Seitz, pictured here in 1959 on the Cristiani Bros. Circus became famous in Europe and were brought back for the Big Show's Blue Unit in 1971 and 1972. Pfening Collection.

they offered him a job for one year. His regular act was not as spectacular as his flirting with death among the clouds. However, it did have some things unusual about it. The most eye catching were the forward and backward roles Petit did while his balance pole was kept in hand. Late in the season Petite helped promote the opening of the Circus in the new Superdome in New Orleans by hiking across its immense interior on a high-wire.

The band screams a wild tempo, the audience senses danger, and red gelled spotlights hit two dazzling Columbians who begin to ascend inclines that lead to the narrow stran of steel cable aloft. They are the invincible Carrillo Brothers. For twelve minutes Pedro Carrillo and his comrade of thirteen years, Daniel Acosta, hold the audience on the edge of their seats with a truely brilliant thrilling performance.

The Carrillo Brothers are not related as their stage name suggests. Daniel Acosta grew up in the rural area outside Bogota, Columbia. In 1959 he joined the Brazilian Circus, Shangrila. Soon he was tumbling and bouncing on the trampoline. Pedro Carrillo was brought up in the city of Bogota, but had never known Acosta until they met in the circus ring. In 1963 the two began working together in a high-wire act.

From 1967 to 1970 they toured America with the talented Jorge Roselle troupe, working shrine dates and ball park shows. Now they are at the summit in more ways than one. Not only are they under contract for four years with the largest and best known circus in history, but in 1975 they were featured on three prime-time television shows: Hawaii 5-0, the Bell Telephone Ringling Special, and Saturday Night Live.

Odds makers have suggested that the Carrillo Brothers might not last very long with their startling act. But Daniel Acosta answers by saying the Carrillos are "always aware and alert on the wire; we know it is serious business." Normally Acosta works with a pole and Carrillo without. Each do fast and fancy steps to get warmed up. Then Acosta sits side saddle on the high-wire while Pedro Carrillo, without hesitation, leap frogs high over his head. Daniel then lays on his back and Pedro dramatically stands on his chest on one foot. Next Pedro moves to center wire and proceeds to hop on one foot across the wire to the attentive beat of a snare drum. Daniel stands on a wooden chair which rests on the wire. Pedro skips rope 20 to 30 times in rapid succession, his feet barely leaving the wire. Then he performs the forward and backward stick jump, bounding far above the cable. This trick is like the Alzana style vault

Pio Nock appeared first in America in 1969 on the Big Show's Red Unit, but it was not until 1974 that he presented his act above a cage of wild animals. In Europe he had frequently worked above an arena of cats. Pfening Collection.







The Carrillo Bros. from Columbia had been in America for a few years before being featured on Ringling Barnum in 1975. Ringling Barnum Photo.

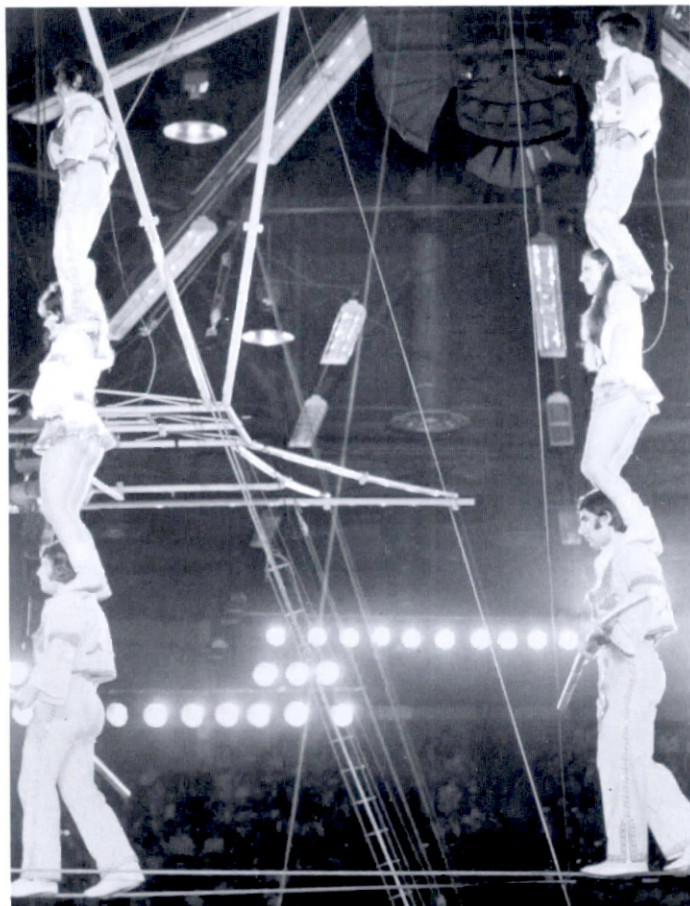
over a doubled up rope, although the stick that Carrillo uses offers less sag than a rope and crowds the trick more. The Carrillo's act is brought to a conclusion with a Mendez-Sietz brand shoulder leap. With perhaps the most refinement of any act to date, Pedro eases himself forward from a standing position on Acosta's shoulders and lands softly on the steel wire. Usually he has total control of his balance, but exaggerates a lack of body control. The crowd gasps, then cheers as he recovers and runs the last couple steps to safety. Phillipe Petit no doubt attracted more people to Ringling Red, but most likely these same people went home recollecting the exploits of the fabulous Carrillo Brothers.

The Blue Unit was vacant of a high-wire act in 1975. In the fall of the same year there was speculation that the Coronas, who had helped revitalize Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus World, would go over to the Blue in 1976. But a new found Bulgarian act went on the road with the Blue show and the Coronas' high-wire act opened at the expanded Ringling Circus World park in April.

The eight person Tzekovi Troupe is typical of the high-wire acts from Soviet bloc nations. The troupe is a large family. They present circus firsts on unique apparatus. They use mechanics for the difficult and dangerous turns.

The Tzekovi do not work as high as most Ringling acts have, but they do perform with great endurance and finesse. Early in the act two human towers of three-high cross the two parallel wires simultaneously. One wonders what will come next after the Tzekovi display a brown bear rolling a globe across the two high wires. Later a swing is put into action much like the Sophia Troupe uses on the ground. The swing is mounted below and at one end of the wire. The catcher takes a firm stance with one foot on each wire while the acrobat readies to be launched from a standing position on the swing. Backward somersaults are done to a two-high and a three-high. The stand-out of the act is Emilia Ivanova who accomplishes a sensational double somersault to a seated position on a cushioned chair which is in turn mounted on a pole held upright by an understander.

Whether it was the Great Wallendas' debut 48 years ago or the startling displays of the Carrillo Brothers dur-



Coming to the Greatest Show on Earth in 1976 was the large Tzekovi Troupe shown here in a Ringling Barnum Photo.

ing last night's performance, circus goers have seen the best high-wire acts in the world when they went to Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Who then was the greatest? Personal opinion must answer that question, but few will deny that they were all great and a little greater by having starred with the "Greatest Show On Earth."

## COLE BROS. SERIES TO START AGAIN

We are pleased to advise that Joe Bradbury will continue his series on the Cole Bros. Circus from 1941 to 1950. These articles will not appear in a series of issues but will be spread out over the year.

The 1941 season article will appear in the November-December 1976 Christmas issue. In this connection we are anxious to locate a special litho made up that year of Senior Jaun Lobo, for a possible color reproduction on the cover of the issue in full color. If you have a copy of this litho please advise the editor.



# DOWNIE BROS. CIRCUS

## Part V — The 1936 and 1937 Seasons

By Joseph T. Bradbury

### The 1936 Season

During the winter months of 1935-36 Tony Lamb, trombone player with Rodney Harris' band launched his Vaudeville Circus using a number of personnel and acts from Downie Bros. The show opened December 12 at Dry Branch, Georgia and played for several weeks in small communities throughout the state. Acts included the Wilson Trio, comedy routine, the Whipping Smiths, whipcracking and sharp shooting, Lola Morales, iron jaw, and Lillian Wilson, trapeze. Theresa Morales performed with her toe and heel catch trapeze act at the opening stand only. Dime Wilson framed a small pit show and made the tour.

Shortly after the first of the year Carlos and Etta Carreon and Allen Hauser began work with several new Kentucky bred horses that Sparks had purchased for the show the previous summer.

The Feb. 1, 1936 Billboard said that Downie quarters activities were now going full blast. The workshops and wardrobe departments had even hired extra help to speed up the work. A week later it was announced that Edward "Shorty" Daugherty, who was formerly with Ringling-Barnum, was now in charge of the Downie elephants, replacing Larry Davis who left several weeks earlier. A frequent visitor to the quarters was Jimmy Heron, owner of

Bond Bros. Circus, which was wintering nearby in Milledgeville.

Soon after Daugherty took over he said that he planned to use the four young elephants purchased last season from Asa Candler in the performance as they were ready to work all routines.

In late February Allen Hauser resigned as equestrian director since he planned to operate concessions at fairs during the season. The show ran the following ad in the Feb. 29, 1936 Billboard. "Downie Bros. Circus Wants — Equestrian Director who can handle and break domestic animals. Truck mechanic with own tools. Address, Charles Sparks, Macon, Ga."

Fortunately it didn't take Sparks long to land a top notch man to replace Hauser. He hired Bert Wallace, who had served as equestrian director, on Rice Bros. Circus in 1935. Ray Marsh Bryden, owner of Rice Bros. said he hated to lose Wallace but that Sparks had made him such an attractive offer Wallace couldn't refuse it.

The Billboard reported almost weekly the Downie quarters activities. It said the paint shops with six men were turning out some beautiful work, two baby jaaguars had been added to the menagerie, and that the show had signed an agreement with the International

Alliance of Bill Posters and Billers to cover the 1936 and 1937 seasons.

Sparks made a major decision to eliminate the street parade in 1936. Earlier, both Tom Mix and Barnett Bros. had made the same decision. Sparks reasoned that it was difficult to create any real circus appeal with trucks. However the show would continue to carry adequate parade type vehicles, including the air calliope, and should it become advisable the parade could be reinstated very easily. The large Washington Crossing the Delaware painting had deteriorated so much that it was removed from the side of the semi which was then painted over the same manner as the rest of the baggage vehicles, red with silver lettering. The body of this semi was slightly remodeled as were others used to transport stock. The Billboard said the show acquired some new advance trucks but it appears there were very few changes made in the rest of the fleet.

In retrospect it can be said that 1935 was the last big season for the motorized show street parade. Up until that point the truck show parade had been the rule rather than the exception. However beginning in 1936 that would be reversed. A few motorized shows paraded in 1936 and would continue to do so through 1939 but the glory days of the truck show parade were gone. The 30 car Cole Bros. Circus in 1936 had a beautiful parade which kept the traditional street pageant with

Photo No. 1 — Downie Bros. on lot at Miami, Fla., Nov. 2, 1936. Tents left to right are padroom, cookhouse, big top, menagerie, and sideshow. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.





vehicles pulled by horses alive in the hearts of circus lovers.

As the 1936 season neared it might be well to look at the nation's economic condition. Although for the past three seasons these accounts have mentioned that business conditions were continuing to improve and it might appear to those readers not familiar with those times that the nation was back to normal. Far from it. The improved business conditions are in comparison only with those of the period 1930-32 when the depression was at its worst. By no means was the country's economic health on par with that of the late 1920's. It was still a long way to go and the nation would not enjoy so called normal business prosperity until World War II. In 1936 Roosevelt would run for a second term and win big. The alphabet soup agencies of the Roosevelt era, CCC, WPA, and PWA provided many jobs for those who could not find employment elsewhere. Showmen were hoping the new season would be more like 1934 rather than 1935 which was very spotty for many shows. The Ringling interests took the popular Hagenbeck-Wallace-Forepaugh-Sells Circus which had toured in 1935 off the road and this move left the country with only three railers, Ringling-Barnum on 90 cars, Al G. Barnes 30 cars, and Cole Bros. 30 cars.

Since its beginning Downie Bros. had advertised itself and was in reality, the largest motorized circus on the road. For the first time the show now had a real rival for those honors, the huge Tom Mix Circus which had grown rapidly and which many observers feel was larger than Downie in 1936. I was fortunate enough to see both shows in 1936 and will discuss this later in the article.

The March 28, 1936 Billboard said the Downie opening would be at Macon on April 16 under auspices of the Utility Club. The article advised that Jack



Photo No. 2 — Downie Bros. on Oglethorpe Avenue lot, Athens, Ga., April 17, 1936. Padroom on left and big top in center had brand new canvas which was in the air for the second stand of the season. Photo by Joe Bradbury.

Hoxie (returning after a year's absence), Dixie Starr, and a company of 10 people, 4 horses, and Hoxie's famous dog, would comprise the wild west aftershow this season. Other notes said that Fred DeIvey, in charge of the carpenter shops, had all equipment ready. Also it mentioned that the show had some new seats but it is doubtful as claimed that seating capacity was increased since the same size big top would be in use. Additional notes said that Bert Wallace and Carlos Carreon were working with the ring stock and had broken a new liberty act, Baker-Lockwood Co. would deliver new canvas in time for the opening, and a new shipment of menagerie animals had been received.

It was planned for the No. 1 advance car to work two weeks ahead instead of the 10 days previously, and the No. 2 car would be one week ahead. A total of 5 vehicles were to constitute the advance fleet with the No. 1 car carrying 12 billposters, lithographers, and banner men. Billboard accounts said the show would use a new line of paper plus a new design for date sheets. Special newspaper and radio material would also be used in 1936.

The April 11, 1936 Billboard said that Theresa Morales and her husband, Jimmy Baker, had left to join Seils-Sterling Circus which was wintering in Macon, Mo. She had been with the Downie Show for many seasons and was the last of the Morales family to leave. Mrs. Sparks said the wardrobe for the program's opening number would be the finest the show ever had. Jack Hoxie and Dixie Starr were expected to arrive soon from the Broken Arrow Ranch in Arizona.

Sparks, Charlie Katz, Harry Mack, and Jack Hoxie visited the Famous Robbins Circus' opening at Milledgeville, Ga. on April 11. This was Jimmie Heron's show which had been titled Bond Bros. in 1935. Heron was well remembered as manager of Downie Bros. 1926-29 and owner for a few months in 1930.

A Billboard article published just prior to the Downie opening said the owners of motorized circuses were confronted with many problems. It said such shows became very popular about 1928 and that the owners had made very heavy investments in equipment then, but now that equipment was becoming obsolete. The author reasoned that most of the motorized circuses were abandoning the street parade because the owners now had a tendency to hide their old fashioned trucks rather than display them. Another problem faced was the







Photo No. 3 — Cages and other vehicles on the Downie lot at Athens, Ga., April 17, 1936. No. 26, dog truck, is at extreme right. Photo by Joe Bradbury.

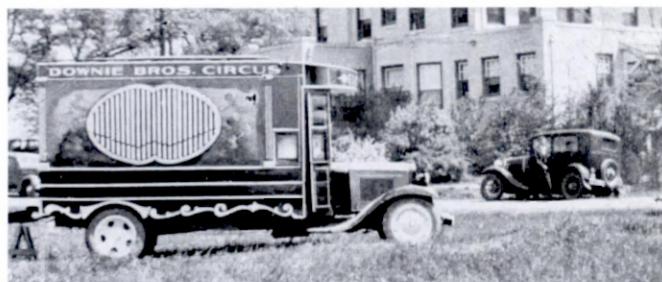


Photo No. 4 — Downie Bros. air calliope on lot at Athens, Ga., April 17, 1936. Photo by Joe Bradbury.

recent widespread floods in the mid-west which had greatly restricted traditional spring territory. It was noted also that there were many conflicting state laws. Some states failed to recognize tags of other states. Certain color trailer lights were required in some states and in some places even a city sticker was required for the windshield. The Interstate Commerce Commission which was formed a short time earlier was expected to look into and hopefully help solve many of these problems. Another problem was the limitation of moves. Most owners felt moves should not be over 150 miles. Vehicles could not safely travel faster than 36 miles per hour and no move should be undertaken which would require over 8 hours driving at the very maximum. Another real problem was to obtain competent drivers for semis. The author opined that long moves might be made by rail as commercial truckers were now doing and in conclusion it was felt that motorized circus owners must reorganize their entire system, replace obsolete equipment, and completely revise their method of doing business.

The 1936 Downie Bros. staff was as follows: Charles Sparks, manager; Charles Katz, asst. manager; Jerome T. Harriman, general agent; Clint Shuford, executive secretary; William Morgan, treasurer; Irish Horan, general press representative; Will L. Wilken and Eddie Jackson, story man; Harry Mack, press back; Bert Wallace, equestrian director; W.E. DeBarrie, sideshow manager; R.O. Scatterday, advertising banner man; George Singleton, supt. big top canvas; Barney (Soldier) Longsdorf, supt. props; Anthony Lasky, electrician; William McNeal, automotive technician; M. Mallman, supt. privileges; Milt Carl, steward; Joe Gilligan, supt. transportation; Art Berry, supt., sideshow canvas; Edward (Shorty) Daugherty, supt. elephants; Mickie O'Brien, supt. wardrobe.

The 1936 season opened at Macon, Ga., Thursday, April 16 and the April 25, 1936 Billboard told the story saying that the show had played to its biggest opening day grosses in its history.

Weather was ideal. It said for brilliance of costuming it far surpassed any other performance produced by Mr. Sparks and costumes especially were evident in the opening spectacle, "The Evolution of Rhythm". The spec was described, "The atmosphere of minstrel pagentry is cleverly and authentically captured amid the circus setting and one of the outstanding novelties of the opening is the 'cake walk' by a score of colored performers." Other review notes said that Jack Hoxie returned after a year's absence as did Butters wire act. George Hanneford's Troupe of riders was retained as well as other old favorites, the Larkins' "furniture moving" act, Miss Georgiana doing a foot slide,

Photo No. 5 — Downie Bros. one sheet upright with lady rider design has yellow title lined in red on blue-green background. Date tag for Springfield, Mass., July 23, 1936 is in red and blue. Evidently this is an old sheet which has been retitled for Downie Bros. as there was no performer by name of Mary Jane Ball on the show during that period. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.



Mickey Larkin's head slide, Frisco seals worked by Capt. Pickard, and the leaps featuring Stanley White and Tony Scala.

The 1936 program was as follows:

1. Opening spec. and pageant, "The Evolution of Rhythm" is a colorful, brilliantly costumed musical review.
2. Introduction of Jack Hoxie, Western movie star.
3. Dogs riding ponies worked by Bert Wallace and Irvin Arnold.
4. Leaps — Stanley White and Tony Scala, principal leapers, and Roy Leonhart, Johnny Bossler, Eddie Williams, Shorty Hinkle, Minert De Orlo, Chet Hooper, and others.
5. Miss Georgiana in foot slide and Mickey Larkin in head slide.
6. Principal riding act — Eddie Hendricks, George Hanneford, and Isobel Gilligan.
7. Swinging ladders, Marion Shuford, Ida White, Georgia Lund, Belle Roberts, Mae McNeil, Jeanette Wallace, Frances Widener, Myrtle McGuyre, Inez and Pauline Butters, with Ella Harris, vocalist.
8. Two herds of elephants worked by Edward Daugherty, Albert Moody, Ella Harris, and Myrtle McGuyre.
9. Karl and Mickey Larkin in the Larkin "furniture moving act", and a comedy acrobatic number with Roy Leonhart, Stanley White, Johnny Bossler, Minert DeOrlo, and Tony Scala.
10. Pigs worked by Bert Wallace and dogs by Jewel Poplin.
11. Clown walkarounds.
12. Roberts trio on aerial bars, Stewart Roberts, Charles Forrest, and Skimon.
13. Clown walkarounds.
14. Pauline Butters and Christobel Roberts in iron jaw number and Ernie White, head balancing.
15. Comedy boxing number, George Wells, Minert DeOrlo, and Roy Leonhart.
16. Liberty act, horses worked by Carlos Carreon and Bert Wallace, and Ponies by Irvin Arnold.
17. Clown walkarounds.
18. Bert Dearo and Corine Dearo in aerial contortion.
19. Butters Family (5) on wire.
20. Two elephants on tight rope,





Photo No. 8 — Light plant semi on Downie Bros. lot at Newport, R.I., July 19, 1936. Photo by John Cutler.

worked by Edward Daugherty and Albert Moody.

21. Frisco's seals, worked by Capt. Harry Pickard.

22. Muscle grinds, Ella Harris, Myrtle McGuyre, and Corine Dearo.

23. Hanneford Family of riders featuring George Hanneford assisted by Eddie Hendricks, Isobel Gilligan, and Mrs. George Hanneford, Charles Forest in seats.

24. Menage numbers, Christobel Roberts, Jewel Poplin, Marion Shuford, Georgia Lund, Pauline and Inez Butters, Frances Widener, Ella Harris, Myrtle McGuyre, Mae McNeil, Carlos Carreon, Irvin Arnold, Jasper Davis, and Bert Wallace.

25. Ernie and Ida White, and Mickey and Karl Larkin in perch numbers, Bert Dearo, frog contortion.

26. High Jumps — Riders, Carlos and Etta Carreon, Marion Shuford, Myrtle McGuyre, Jasper Davis, Irvin Arnold, and Jewel Poplin.

Rodney Harris had a total of 13 pieces in the band and clown alley was headed by Roy Leonhart, producing, with 9 other clowns.

The sideshow lineup included Carl Thorson, inside lecturer and juggler; J.H. McHugh and Princess Estelle, mental act; Mille DeBarrie's Australian Bird Circus; Mac's South Sea Islanders with Florence Peek and Miss Cavanaugh, dancers; Myrna Karsey, snakes; Siberian torture mystery, and Edward Washington's

Photo No. 7 — Downie Bros. herd of nine elephants on lot at Newport, R.I., July 19, 1936. Photo by John Cutler.



minstrels and band of 14 people.

The reporter said that all canvas was new from Baker-Lockwood with exception of the sideshow which was used the latter part of last season. The big top was a 120 ft. round with three 40's; menagerie 60 with four 30's, and sideshow 60 with two 30's. Outside candy stands with striped canvas were unusually attractive this year and the lunch stand operated by Bench Hand and wife was one of the most elaborate on the road. Approximately 500 orphans from local institutions were guests of the show at the matinee. The article concluded by saying the show had abandoned the street parade at least for an experimental period and said that Manager Sparks will study the reaction to elimination of parades and if unfavorable is understood that parade equipment can be added to the show on short notice.

Leaving Macon the show moved the 100 miles in good time to Athens, Ga., for the second stand of the season.

I well recall the Downie Bros. date in Athens on April 17, 1936. I was in high school but it was during spring vacation so I was able to spend the entire day on the Oglethorpe Avenue lot. Leaving home about 6 a.m. on foot I arrived shortly thereafter and found the cook and dining tents already up and ready to serve breakfast. Truck No. 55, used to haul grocery and cookhouse supplies, had a canvas tarp on it to protect the art work on its sides. It had been used in the street parades of prior years and was one of the vehicles which could be utilized in event the parade was restored later in the season.

On the other end of the lot 8 trucks had already arrived and were parked in line. They had traveled in convoy as



Photo No. 10 — Kitchen and dining tents on Downie Bros. lot at Quincy, Mass., June 8, 1936. At right is No. 70 semi while at left is No. 55 with canvas tarp to protect the art work on its sides. This vehicle could be utilized in the street parade had it been reinstated during the season. Photo by John Cutler.

such was still legal in Georgia at the time. About 1938 convoys were restricted to 3 vehicles and after World War II prohibited entirely. In most states (possibly all) Downie moved in small convoys by departments. The 8 trucks already in consisted mostly of cages and semis carrying lead stock.

Shortly thereafter more trucks began to arrive and the set-up began. By eleven a.m. everything was in. Notes I made that day say the canvas lineup consisted of the big top, menagerie, sideshow, padroom, cookhouse, dining tent, concession tops, and three or four smaller tents for various performers and personnel. Three semis were used to transport the horses and ponies and two for elephants. I particularly noted the Washington Crossing the Delaware painting was gone but Ben Hur was still there and I put in my notes there were at least three or four tableau type trucks in addition to the air calliope on the lot. One small stake driving machine was used and seemed adequate. The big top and menagerie made of snowy white canvas was the most beautiful I had ever seen. It was a warm and sunny day and absolutely no electrical illumination would have been needed inside during the matinee as it was so bright.

Photo No. 9 — Trucks with sideshow top in back on Downie Bros. lot at Newport, R.I., July 19, 1936. Photo by John Cutler.







The following notes were made on the menagerie.

Downie Bros. Menagerie, Athens, Ga. April 17, 1936.

9 elephants (Teddy, Tena, Babe, Queen, Pinto, Addie, Cora, Inez, and Marion)

4 camels (all Asiatic two humped)

#### Cages.

1.—2 lions

2.—1 tiger

3.—4 sea lions

4.—4 jaguars

5.—2 leopards

6.—1 sloth bear

7.—1 lion

8.—1 kangaroo and 9 monkeys

9.—dogs.

Color scheme for the 7 regular Downie two den cages was as follows: (3) red, brown, white; (1) blue, red, and white; (1) orange, blue, and white; (1) green and white; (1) yellow, red, and white. The dog truck was red with white lettering, but I failed to record the color of the sea lion cage.

Memories of the matinee performance in Athens that warm spring afternoon are still very vivid in my mind. One thing in particular that stands out in my memory was the beautiful costuming of the performers and animals in the opening spec and the music produced by Rodney Harris' band. Unfortunately I cannot recall many specific pieces played by Harris' band during the three times I saw the Downie show but there is one very beautiful piece I recall the band played in 1936, for the perch acts. It was "Isle of Golden Dreams", which went back to 1919 and by then had become a so called "old standard" which was played by many circus bands. A few years later Glen Miller's band recorded this number while I was at the University of Georgia and it was often heard on the juke boxes in the taverns and student hangouts around Athens. Everytime I heard it and I still do to this day, recall that spring afternoon I was perched high on the blues under the Downie big top when Rodney Harris, dressed as always in an immaculate white suit, led the band in their new uniforms, and played this old favorite, "Isle of Golden Dreams." In my memory I can even hear the clear notes of the bass horn coming through

Photo No. 11 — Semi used to transport ring stock on lot at Quincy, Mass., June 8, 1936. Photo by John Cutler.

as the band lowered the volumn during the more tense moments of the high perch acts in the end rings.

Following Athens the show went into South Carolina for a single stand at Greenville, then on to North Carolina to play Charlotte and Burlington. Danville, April 22, was the first of four dates in Virginia, afterwhich the show entered West Virginia at Bluefield. Stands next came at Hinton, Beckley, Charleston, Huntington, and Logan. Rather than venture further into the upper Ohio valley, traditional early season Downie territory, which had been ravaged by recent floods, the show turned eastward into Virginia and played Covington, Lexington, Stanton, Charlottesville, and Fredricksburg. It was at Annapolis, Md., May 9, then headed to Pennsylvania with first stand coming at Harrisburg. Five additional dates in eastern Pennsylvania followed before the show went into New Jersey for a week.

At Lancaster, Pa., May 13, Ida White fell 25 ft. while she and her husband, Ernie, were doing their perch act. The fall was caused when Ernie walking backward with the pole stepped into a hole and it threw the act out of balance. Fortunately he somehow manipulated the pole so as to break her fall and this probably saved her life. She was taken to a local hospital where her condition was listed as serious. It was the worst performer accident on the Downie show in some time.

So far business for the show had been pretty good. Sparks termed the take in New Jersey as being very good.

The show began its New England tour at Stamford, Conn. May 25, which was followed by other stands in the state at Bridgeport, New Haven, Waterbury, and Hartford. Ringling-Barnum had booked Hartford for a date later in June.

Twelve dates in Massachusetts came next. Northampton, May 30, gave poor business where the show was on a lot that had been under water during the spring flood. The next day at Pittsfield was better and there was a straw house

at night. At Greenfield, June 3, the big top was only half filled at night due in part to a severe electrical storm which hit right at showtime. Local fans, led by Ray Bickford, succeeded in getting Greenfield schools closed that day for the first time in that city.

Downie Bros, as well as all overland shows, began getting more and more flak from local officials over the chalked directional arrows used to mark the route. The arrows, put on by chalk, ordinarily were placed on utility poles but sometimes they went on various buildings. At Northampton, Mass., complaints reached Mayor Charles L. Dunn's office about the arrows Downie had put up and he ordered the show to remove them which it promptly did. However, the mayor said he would take no chances on another circus defacing the city with its directional arrows so he refused to grant a permit for Gorman Bros. to play the city on June 15.

While in the Boston area Jack Hoxie and his wife were presented with a new Silver Dome living trailer by that plant.

Leaving the Bay State the show played Portsmouth, N.H., June 13, then moved into Maine for sixteen stands. One of the longest runs so far in the season was from Dover-Foxcroft to Presque Isle, approximately 190 miles, which was made on a Sunday. While in Maine the show placed an order for new poles for all departments.

In the meantime by late June it was evident that circus business was ahead of 1935. Both Ringling-Barnum and Al G. Barnes were doing much better and Sparks was quoted in the July 4, 1936 Billboard saying that Downie's business had been very satisfactory and that the show had experienced but two rainy days since the season began. Other Downie notes said that the new elephants, often referred to as the "Coca Cola Elephants", were working nicely with the five older ones. Rodney Harris and band receives much applause for their center ring concerts before each show. Grooms, prop boys, ushers, and those on the front door all have new uniforms, and a final bit said the show had two sellouts at Bangor, Maine on June 29.

The show returned to New Hampshire, July 3, at Rochester, then played Laconia, Nashua, Concord, Newport, and Woodsville. The crowd really packed into the big top at Nashua. Four dates were played in Vermont and then the show moved into Massachusetts to play Fitchburg, Salem, Hyannis, and Falmouth. It was at Newport, R.I., July 20, and Norwich, Conn., July 21, where the members of the Charles Sparks Tent No. 14 of CFA visited and held a party after the evening performance. A final visit to Massachusetts saw the show at Worcester and Springfield, both of which produced straw houses. The



show concluded its New England tour following a stand at Danbury, Conn., July 25. Business lately had been great and the Billboard said this was Downie's greatest season ever in New England. Myrtle McGuyre, who had suffered a broken ankle earlier in the season, was reported to be back in the performance.

A week in New York State began at Hudson, July 27, a new town for the show, but which gave nice business. In Gloversville new poles for the big top, menagerie, sideshow, and cookhouse were delivered by Kenneth Van who for several years had furnished them for the show. Oneonta, N.Y., July 31, was a fine day. In the evening assistant manager, Charlie Katz, said it was a tossup on whether or not to give two shows but he finally decided just to put down the straw and accommodate all of the crowd at one performance. Along about this time Harry A. Allen, a well known circus fan, joined the show as a contracting agent.

The show moved into Pennsylvania at Bellefonte, August 3, and played a total of six dates before going into West Virginia. Fairmont, August 10, was the hottest day so far in the season and saw a fair sized crowd in the afternoon but a good one at night. It was announced that the advance was now billing ahead in some stands in the south as much as 30 days as Sparks was making a great bid for southern territory in the face of considerable expected opposition. After three West Virginia dates the show entered Maryland at Cumberland, August 13. On the move the next day to Hagerstown, due to a bad haul over the mountains the seat stringers didn't arrive in time for the matinee. With quite a crowd on hand Sparks had chairs put on the ground in the space where the grandstand and blue seats were usually placed. Although receipts from reserves were lost it was felt this was better than blowing the afternoon show.

Downie next headed into Virginia where both Richmond and Norfolk had turnaway houses. The weather was now very hot as it was in most of the nation, however the show's route kept it out of the great drought areas of the midwest which had turned circus business sour for a number of shows. There was an accident on the Downie lot at Portsmouth, August 20, when an employee, L.L. Bush, accidentally backed a truck into a small tent and killed John McGann where he was sleeping. McGann was a concessionaire, evidently following the show but was not employed by it. A police court acquitted Bush on the technical charge of manslaughter.

The show went into North Carolina at Winston-Salem, August 25, and after 13 stands headed onto South Carolina for dates at Mullins, Conway, Lake City, and Charleston. One of the best dates in the area was at Lumberton,

OGLETHORPE AVENUE CIRCUS GROUNDS  
(Season of 1936.)  
**ATHENS, Friday 17**  
ONE DAY ONLY **April**

CHAS. SPARKS presents  
**DOWNIE BROS. CIRCUS**  
Featuring  
AN IMMENSE COLLECTION OF THE  
EARTH'S WILD BEASTS  
Special Added Feature  
**JACK HOXIE**  
FAMOUS WESTERN STAR  
IN PERSON  
With his  
WONDER HORSE  
**SCOUT**  
100 STAR ACTS  
500 PEOPLE  
20 DANCING HORSES  
2 HERDS OF PERFORMING ELEPHANTS  
The HANNEFORDS  
FRISCO'S SEALS  
GORGEIOUS SPECTACLE  
TRULY A BIG CIRCUS  
SHOWS 7-2 A.M. P.M.  
DOORS OPEN 1 P.M.  
PRICES  
Children, 25c  
Adults, 50c  
Built Up To A Standard - Not Down To A Price

Newspaper advertisement for Downie Bros. stand at Athens, Ga., April 17, 1936. Joe Bradbury Collection.

N.C., September 8, where there was a sellout.

Savannah, September 14, began an eight stand tour of Georgia and as usual the city turned out big for the show which used the fairgrounds lot. Local reviewers termed Capt. Pickard's seals an outstanding act.

Downie met expected opposition in Georgia from other shows. Barnett Bros. had come in before Downie and Tom Mix followed. Mix was scheduled in Savannah for September 28. However, Downie met more obstacles in Georgia than opposition circuses. There was a sizeable infantile paralysis epidemic in the state as well as other sections of the south. Downie was denied a permit because of the situation at Waycross, September 21, but was able to substitute Blackshear, a much smaller town. Despite the infantile paralysis outbreak the home state gave the show some good takes. Augusta was very good and there was a capacity night house in Dublin where many visitors came from nearby Macon.

I caught the Tom Mix Circus in Athens, Georgia, Sept. 24, 1936, and am able to compare it with Downie Bros. which I had seen back in April. Both shows were claiming to be the nation's biggest motorized circus. No doubt Mix was physically bigger in many respects. It had a larger big top and all in all had a tremendous canvas spread.

It looked bigger on the lot than Downie. Although I have no exact figures I feel certain the Mix show had more vehicles and the uniformly painted house trailers which carried the Tom Mix performers and staffers made a great flash on the lot. Both shows had excellent motor equipment which was well painted and decorated. With Tom Mix as a superstar the show had a very strong and fairly balanced performance. It was heavy on equine acts, had a flying act, but no caged wild animal numbers. Downie was vastly superior in the menagerie department, having 9 cages with a fine variety of animals as compared to Tom Mix's five cages with only a couple of lions, deer, etc. Also Mix had only three elephants while Downie had nine. Somehow I seemed to like the Downie show better than Mix, although Tom Mix personally was still a great hero in my life. In any event it was a memorable occasion in my circus life to have been able to see both Downie Bros. and the Tom Mix Circus in 1936. They were at their peak and were the largest and strongest motorized circuses on the road that season.

After playing Valdosta, September 22, Downie made two stands in Florida at Lake City and Tallahassee, then went into Alabama to catch Dothan, Sept. 25. The show returned to Florida for stands at Panama City and Pensacola, then again into Alabama where it played Greenville, Montgomery, Sylacauga, and Anniston. Since leaving Georgia the show had continued to get excellent business. Best date was at Pensacola, Fla. which required an extra night performance to take care of the patrons. The matinee and both night shows that day saw straw houses.

It was back into Georgia at Rome, October 5, on a rainy day. It also rained the next day at Chattanooga, Tenn. where only fair crowds attended. That city had three circuses in the fall of 1936, Downie Bros., Tom Mix, and Ringling-Barnum.

The Billboard said that Downie Bros.

Photo No. 12 — Truck No. 61 on Downie Bros. lot at Worcester, Mass., July 22, 1936. This is another truck which could be used for parade purposes had Sparks decided to reinstate the street parade during the season. Photo by John Cutler.





was continuing to do splendid business on its southern tour, that four trucks were being used on the advance, and that a new line of paper was being posted.

Other Tennessee stands came at Knoxville and Newport as the show made a large swing back into North Carolina at Asheville, October 9. The next eight days saw Downie playing stands at the two Carolinas with finale coming at Georgetown, S.C., October 17. Five members of the sideshow band were injured in a truck wreck near Spartanburg, S.C. on the move from Greenville to Union on October 13.

From Georgetown the show then made a record run, travelling 355 miles in 15 hours to Jacksonville, Florida. The Sunday run was an all time mileage record in the history of the show to date. The fleet left Georgetown at 12:01 a.m. and arrived in Jacksonville at 3 p.m. without a single mishap on the entire trip. It was the first show of the season for Jacksonville which was played two days, October 19-20, under auspices of the Morocco Shrine Temple.

Other Florida stands were at Gainesville, Ocala, Lakeland, St. Petersburg, Tampa, and the show was at Sarasota, October 27, where there were two capacity crowds on hand. Sparks told The Billboard that the 1936 season had been the best in five years and that Florida had been especially good despite the fact that Downie Bros. was playing only two weeks ahead of Ringling-Barnum.

After Sarasota the show moved on down the state and was at Miami, Nov. 2-3. It then headed northward on the east coast playing Ft. Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, Ft. Pierce, and Daytona. The show was at St. Augustine, November 10, same day Ringling-Barnum was at Jacksonville about 30 miles to the north. Much visiting took place between personnel of the two shows.

The final date of the 1936 season was at Live Oak, Fla., November 11. After the evening performance the show loaded promptly and left at 11:30 p.m. for Macon quarters. The fleet negotiated the 240 miles in good time and by 3:00 p.m. the next day everything was in Macon, unloaded,

and in place. Total mileage for the season was 11,600.

The Nov. 28, 1936 Billboard said that Downie Bros. had experienced a fine season with the banner stand being at Pensacola, Fla. where 3 shows were given. Rumors that the show would go on rails were still current but the article said that informed sources indicated that Downie Bros. would be on trucks again in 1937. The quarters at Macon were furnished free by the city as was customary. Frank McGuyre left to join the Dan Rice Circus and Allen Hauser, who had been with Downie until the past season, was named equestrian director of the Macon Shrine Circus. In early December both Sparks and Katz went to Hot Springs, Ark. to take the baths and enjoy several weeks of vacation.

The Dec. 25, 1936 Billboard in summarizing the circus season just completed said it had been an excellent one. History would later record that for Charlie Sparks, 1936 was the best season ever while he was at the helm of Downie Bros.

### The 1937 Season

The Jan. 2, 1937 Billboard dropped a real bombshell with news that Sparks had just returned to Macon from Sarasota and announced that arrangements were being completed with Sam Gumpertz, senior vice president and general manager of Ringling-Barnum, for him to use the title of "Sparks-John Robinson Combined Circus" in 1937. Sparks said that, "details remained to be worked out" but would discuss the matter no further. When asked if his show would be on rails he replied, "Mr. Gumpertz and I will make a complete statement for publication at an early date". Gumpertz when questioned by reporters also wasn't very talkative about the matter. He remarked, "Mr. Sparks will take out Sparks-John Robinson Circus this season", then took off for Peru, Indiana. The article said it was understood that the Downie title would be shelved but that some equipment would be utilized on the show, how much depending on

whether it would be on trucks or rails.

The startling part about the announcement was the fact the Ringling interests would even consider leasing or selling the titles of the Sparks and John Robinson shows. Although all but one (Al G. Barnes) of the five former American Circus Corporation circuses which John Ringling bought in September 1929 were off the road the Ringling management had refused all offers to sell, lease, or dispose of in any manner the titles or equipment of the shows no longer on the road. The Sparks equipment was in Sarasota while that of John Robinson, Sells-Floto, and Hagenbeck-Wallace was in Peru. Whether John Ringling's death in December 1936 caused the sudden change in attitude of Gumpertz in this matter is not known to the author but in any event beginning early in 1937, Gumpertz, who had been top man with Ringling since July 1932, started to sell and lease the excess circus titles and equipment. Only two years earlier when Zack Terrell and Jess Adkins were framing their new Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Railroad Circus Gumpertz wouldn't sell them even a tent stake. Now Gumpertz was negotiating with Charlie Sparks to sell (or lease) the Sparks and John Robinson titles. It was indeed big news in the circus world.

In mid January Sparks and Katz returned to Sarasota for a second conference with Gumpertz and it was announced that the show would be on trucks. A short time after they got back to Macon, John M. Kelley, general counsel for Ringling-Barnum, and John Robinson IV came by to discuss the matter further with Sparks. What John Robinson IV's interest was in the negotiation was not publicly revealed. Possibly it concerned the Robinson family's claim that the American Circus Corporation illegally sold the John Robinson title to Ringling in 1929, contending that when the title was sold to Mugivan and Bowers back in 1916 there was a clause in the contract which gave the Robinson family first option to purchase it back in case it should ever be offered for sale. The family had threatened court action for years. Evidently Sparks and Gumpertz could not come to terms and in early February Sparks said he would continue to operate Downie Bros. as in the past. Neither Sparks nor Gumpertz made any public comments on the matter. A few weeks later Gumpertz sold a number of former Sparks flat cars to the World of Mirth Shows (carnival) and leased the Hagenbeck-Wallace title with equipment for a 35 car show to Edward Arlington and J. Frank Hatch. Gumpertz also began negotiations with Howard Y. Bary to lease him the Sparks and John Robinson titles plus equipment for same and in all probability it would have been finaliz-

Photo No. 13 — Downie Bros. midway, Worcester, Mass., July 22, 1936. Photo by John Cutler.





ed had not Bary purchased the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus from Arlington and Hatch soon after the 1937 season began.

In the meantime, early in the year, Sparks made an agreement with Bob Morton to furnish Downie Bros. canvas, seats, necessary equipment, and elephant, horse and other acts for the Miami, Fla. Shrine Circus to be held in February. Two baggage cars were used to transport the animals and equipment from Macon to Miami and return. The cars were hooked onto the Dixie Flyer and made the trip in record time. Asst. Manager Katz accompanied the cars to Miami. While the elephants were in Miami, Sparks sold Teddy, the male tusker and first elephant with the Downie show, to William Ketrow who owned Kay Bros. Circus which was wintering in Miami. Ketrow also purchased a big dog act from Sparks at the same time. The sale of Teddy cut the number of elephants in the Downie herd to eight. Making the 1937 tour would be Tena, Babe, Queen, Pinto, Addie, Cora, Inez, and Marion.

As usual the Macon quarters shops opened soon after the first of the new year and the show routinely prepared for the coming season. The shops built a new No. 1. advertising semi and replaced three older tractors which pulled semis with the new 1937 models. As Sparks had definitely decided against any more street parades most of the paintings and art decorations on the former tableau trucks gradually disappeared. Photos indicate the Ben Hur painting was now gone.

The Feb. 6, 1937 Billboard carried the following advertisement. "Downie Bros. Circus Wants lady menage riders who can do swinging ladder, clowns who can leap, boss canvasman and assistant. Address Charles Sparks, Macon, Ga." As the program for the coming season was being set there would be many changes, probably more than at any previous year in the history of the show. Sparks decided that since he played more or less the same territory each season he needed some new faces in the performance. Since Jack Hoxie had left to be the prime attraction in the new circus bearing his name Downie needed a suitable replacement for him. Reb Russell, former All American football player, and currently Hollywood movie cowboy, was signed for the 1937 season. In 1936 he had been on the Russell Bros. Circus so was no stranger to circus business.

The Feb. 27, 1937 Billboard said that Jerome T. Harriman, general agent, was assembling his staff and that Fred C. Kilgore who for the past two seasons had been with Cole Bros. would be the Downie contracting agent. Harriman announced plans to add a new banner truck as well as an opposition brigade truck, making a total of six vehicles in advance instead



Photo No. 14 — Group photo of Downie Bros. personnel at Newburg, N.Y., June 1, 1936. Photo by E.J. Kelty.

of four, but the inventory of vehicles made near the end of the season indicate these plans evidently were not fulfilled. The show still used only four advance trucks. It was also announced that Erie was making designs in the billing paper for the new acts to be on the show in 1937, also that Harriman and Will L. Wilkin, general press representative, were designing new ad display mats and pictorial paper. A beautiful new pictorial booklet was planned and Theodore A. Lee of the Louisville Rotogravure Co. spent several days in Macon in consultation with Sparks and his staff regarding new heralds and the booklet.

News from Macon in March said that Marion Shuford was breaking a new horse purchased for her by Sparks and that Harriman had departed northward to arrange the route. The March 13, 1937 Billboard had this advertisement, "Downie Bros. Circus has for sale, 12 red minstrel band coats, complete minstrel suits, silk hats etc. all in good condition."

The nation again experienced some very rough weather with floods in the late winter and early spring but as the 1937 season approached showmen were very optimistic on prospects for a successful tour. Roosevelt had just been sworn in for a second term assuring them there would be no dramatic changes in government policy. Business activity had accelerated and generally the natives had a little more money in their pockets and if growing restlessness of organized labor didn't result in too much turmoil the coming season should be a good one. With the new Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus on the road the country now had four railers after dropping to three in 1936. The list for 1937 included Ringling-Barnum, 90 cars; Cole Bros. 40 cars; Hagenbeck-

Wallace 35 cars, and Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto, 30 cars. The large Tom Mix Circus still remained Downie's main rival for top honors in the motorized field. Cole Bros. retained its magnificent street parade and mudders still presenting the daily march included Seal Bros., Haag Bros., and Dan Rice.

The April 3, 1937 Billboard contained the show's traditional "call" advertisement which read as follows. "Call, Downie Bros. Circus. All people engaged report to Macon, Ga. Thursday 9 a.m., April 8. Show opens Monday, April 12. Can use checker-up for Social Security, two Wild West people. Clown who can leap." The new social security act just going into effect created additional duties for the office forces and many circuses were advertising for someone to take over this chore for them.

The 1937 season opened at Macon, Ga., April 12 and the April 24 Billboard carried an extensive review of the show. The article said that Downie Bros. had youth, color, many new acts, and that Sparks had emphasized novelty and made many changes in performer personnel. Standard acts featured with the show for many seasons were replaced by acts entirely new to the show. Very few so called oldtimers are still here the reviewer noted, most of the performers are youthful and were unknown to circus goers a decade ago. There is a troupe of 16 Indians who appear in the big show as well as with Reb Russell in the concert. New is the Eno Japanese family and Albert Hodgini Jr.'s riding act. Carl Larkin has a new hoop and club juggling act, discarding the old "furniture movers" routine. Mickey Larkin's head slide and the foot slide of Miss Georgiana are retained. Stewart Roberts, aerial bar act, is a new one. Bert Wallace, equestrian director, works in tuxedo and Carlos Carreon and Irvin Arnold in liberty numbers work in full dress. Costumes for the



opening spec are unusually bright and varied this year, all designed by Mrs. Sparks. Reb Russell, movie cowboy, held a good percentage of the crowd for the concert. He first works his horse, Rebel, in an act, then does trick and fancy roping, including big horse catch, works whips, pony express, shooting act, and trick riding. Indians make an interesting flash with tepee in menagerie and they appear in the wild west lineup as well as in the big show. In the concert they do horse riding, trick roping numbers, and dances. Chief Standing Still is head of the group which has members of the Otoe, Pawnee, and Pottowatomie tribes. The equipment looks in fine condition but the only new canvas at the opening was the sideshow. Horse numbers came in for special praise. Marion Shuford who rides the waltz and rear horse is a talented performer. The weather was ideal on opening day, matinee was capacity, and at night some were seated on the ground. Overall receipts were 30 percent higher than last year. Junior Chamber of Commerce sponsored the opening.

The 1937 program was as follows:

1. Pageant of Splendor, tournament, 122 persons take part. No sideshow performers are used in opening spec this year.

2. Reb Russell, concert star, and his troupe of 15 Indians are introduced immediately after the tournament.

3. Foot juggling, Ring 1, Taki Eno; Suyko Eno, Ring 2; and Ring 3 by Lena Eno.

4. Leaps over horses and elephants by Tony Scala, Stanley White, Johnny Bossler, Roy Leonhart, Eddie Kech, Lee Smith, Tom Thornton, and Eddie Carr.

5. Slides. Mickey Larkin in head slide and Georgiana Larkin in foot slide.

6. Swinging ladders with Ella Harris, prima donna, and Alverta Rozina, Jeanette Wallace, Inez Butters, Helen Tudor, Marion Tudor, Belle Roberts, Dora Widener, Ida Mills, and Martha Principena.

7. Elephants perform in Ring 1 by Frances Widener; Ring 2 by Edward Daugherty; and Ring 3, by Ella Harris.

8. Comedy acrobats, Tudor Sisters and Avery (5 persons) in Ring 1 and Roy Leonhart, Stanley White, Tony Scala, and Johnny Bossler in Ring 3.

9. High bar act by Stewart Roberts and company (4).

10. Clown walkaround.

11. Concert announcement.

12. Ring 1, Belle Roberts in iron jaw feats; Ring 2, Ella Harris, trapeze; Ring 3, Martha Principena, iron jaw.

13. Ring 1, Tudor Sisters and Avery, contortion act; Ring 2, Eno Japanese troupe in risely act; and Ring 3, Larkin trio in hoop and club juggling.

14. Riding act of Albert Hodgini Jr. and company.

15. Clown walkaround.



Photo No. 15 — Reb Russell, Hollywood movie cowboy, on Downie Bros. lot, season of 1937. Photo by Eddie Jackson.

16. Ring 1, liberty act, worked by Carlos Carreon; Ring 2, ponies, Jeanette Wallace; and Ring 3, liberty act, Irvin Arnold.

17. Clown walkaround.

18. Butters troupe on wire (6 people).

19. Rings 1 and 3, tight rope elephant

Photo No. 16 — Downie Bros. one sheet upright advertising Reb Russell, Western movie star and his wonder horse, Rebel, season of 1937. Pfening Collection.



act worked by Georgiana Lund and Jeanette Wallace.

20. Frisco seals, Capt. H.C. Pickard.

21. Second concert announcement.

22. Menage act with Jewell Poplin, Marion Shuford, Carlos and Etta Carreon, Georgiana Larkin, Ella Harris, Belle Roberts, Inez Butters, Frances Widener on Barney, Jasper Davis on Bisco, Etta Carreon on Lucky Strike, Irvin Arnold riding Kentucky in fire jump and Flyer in liberty jump.

23. Ring 1, Eno Troupe in perch act; Ring 3, Karl and Mickey Larkin in perch act.

24. Indians, cowboys, and cowgirls in finale.

The 1937 staff included: Charles Sparks, manager; Charles Katz, asst. manager; Clint Shuford, treasurer; William Morgan, auditor; Chester Mays, social security secretary; Everette Bridgeman, supt. front door; M. Mallman, supt. concessions; Bert Wallace, equestrian director; Irvin Arnold, supt. ring stock; Rodney Harris, bandleader; Joe Gilligan, supt. transportation; Anthony Laska, supt. lights; Barney (Soldier) Lonsdorf, supt. props; Edward Dougherty, supt. menagerie; Ferley Houser, supt. canvas; Harold Chaplin, supt. sideshow canvas; Frank (Mitt) Carl, supt. cookhouse; C.C. Landers, master mechanic.

The advance staff included Jerome Harriman, general agent; Fred C. Kilgore, contractor; Walter F. Gilley, manager advance cars; Will Wilken, story man, a week ahead of show; Harry Mack, press agent back and announcer.

Rodney Harris, bandleader, had 13 men, and Roy Leonhart was producing clown with a total of ten in the alley.

W.E. DeBarrie was manager of the sideshow with the following attractions; Archie Blue, bandmaster; Chanda, inside lecturer and mental act; Myrna Karsey, snakes; Pauline King, illusions; Milo Laroway, sword swallower; Miss DeBarrie's Australian bird circus; Mac's South Sea Islanders, Hawaiian troupe, and Karanan, magician.

Leaving Macon the show played three additional Georgia stands, Thomaston, Griffin, and Gainesville. Then came a single stand in South Carolina at Spartanburg followed by one date in North Carolina, Gastonia. Four stands took the show across Virginia and into West Virginia with initial date at Hinton, April 23. Downie played Logan, W.V., April 26, with three other shows scheduled to make the town. Dan Rice would play May 30 and the Dodson and Page carnivals were also booked. After four West Virginia dates Downie moved into Ohio at Portsmouth which was followed by Chillicothe, Athens, Lancaster, Steubenville, and East Liverpool, May 4. Ray Roger's Wallace Bros. Circus had beaten Downie into the area and



had been at East Liverpool six days earlier on April 28. Sparks told The Billboard that his early season business had been satisfactory and the take in Ohio was better than usual, especially at Steubenville where Downie was the first circus of the season. At East Liverpool he said the show had a light matinee but night house was three-fourths full.

The show entered Pennsylvania at Charleroi, May 5, for seventeen consecutive stands. It beat all opposition into Johnstown with its date, May 14. Downie was also first at Harrisburg, May 17, playing to heavy crowds. Reb Russell, who appeared on the radio in Harrisburg, got a lot of publicity for the show. The lot there was very soggy, being vacated the day before by the Strates Carnival. Ringling-Barnum used large newspaper ads to plug its appearance in Harrisburg scheduled for June 4 but it didn't adversely affect Downie's business. During the Pennsylvania tour a truck turned over near Lewistown but the driver escaped serious injury.

Rodney Harris needed musicians for the band and hopefully got them with this advertisement in the May 22, 1937 Billboard. "Wanted, Musicians for Downie Bros. Circus. Experienced bass drum and solo clarinet to join on wire. If you can't cut it, don't answer."

The show moved into New Jersey at Plainfield, May 25, for six stands in the state. O.R. Dillingham, former circus troupier, wrote to the Billboard that for Downie's date at Garfield, May 28, he had seen the finest circus billing there in years. He remarked the town was hard to bill and that Downie's billers deserve much credit for the job they did.

After New Jersey a single date in New York followed, Newburg, June 1, then it was on into New England for the show's annual visit with first stand coming at Waterbury, Conn., The Tom Mix Circus had beaten Downie into New England by ten days and during the show's three weeks there it would see some of the heaviest opposition from other shows in its history. In addition to Mix there would also be in New England at the time, Ringling-Barnum, the 40 car Cole Bros. Circus with star attractions Clyde Beatty, Ken Maynard, and its daily street parade which was powerful opposition, Eddy Bros., Kay Bros., and Walter L. Main.

After three dates in Connecticut, Downie played Webster, Mass., Newport, R.I., then returned to Massachusetts for a string of 15 stands. While the circus was at Lawrence, June 16, Cole was only 11 miles away at Lowell and there was much visiting between the two shows. Many Downie troupers especially went to see the street parade and visit friends. Cole used a lot of "wait" paper against Downie in the area and at a number of stands the show had con-

siderable opposition from various carnivals. Despite this opposition the Downie show experienced good business at most stands. Both Lowell and Waltham gave capacity houses and there were two packed ones at Gloucester. Rain was an adverse factor at many stands throughout New England.

**CHAS. 1937**  
**SPARKS**  
Presents



THE ALL NEW BIGGER DOUBLY ENLARGED MAMMOTH CIRCUS OF ALL TIMES

3 RINGS Hippodrome Menagerie Wild West and Trained Wild Animal Circus

A COLOSSAL CIRCUS OF WORLD WIDE FETTERERS

The Most Prodigious Array of Circus Features Ever Assembled

Chas. Sparks' High-Jumping Horses

4 Herds of Performing Elephants

24 Dancing Horses and Dancing Girls

400 PERFORMERS—25 CLOWNS

TRIPLE-SIZED MENAGERIE

Herds of Camels—Den Upon Den of Unparalleled Beasts of Jungle and Plateau

Hollywood, I did a Screen Star and His Congress of Rodeo Champions a n d Indian Pow-Wow.

**"REB RUSSELL"**

Downie Bros.' Gorgeous Spectacle

**"The PARADE OF GOLD"**

Dazzling Colorful Pageant of Stars and Beasts Never Before Equalled!

ACRES OF TENTS, SEATS FOR 6000

The Highest Class Circus on Earth and the Greatest and Biggest Circus at Popular Prices

**ADULTS 50c CHILDREN 25c**

2 PERFORMANCES—2 and 8 P. M.

DOORS OPEN 1 and 7 P. M.

Greenfield, June 24, was the final stand in the Bay State and then the show went into Vermont to play Brattleboro and Bennington. Next it moved over into New York and was at Little Falls, June 28.

The June 26, 1937 Billboard said that circus business over the country was going well generally. Despite heavy spring rains and chilly weather in many places business was satisfactory and some shows were registering an increase over 1936. Ringling-Barnum, Cole Bros., Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto, Hagenbeck-Wallace, Tom Mix, Downie Bros., and Dan Rice all had reported some big days. New England territory was said to have been very good for the several circuses playing there.

The show played nine stands in upper New York State covering the resort areas. The final date in this region was at Glen Falls, July 7, and on that day the new canvas received from Baker-

Lockwood Co. was set up for the first time. Included was a big top, 120 ft. round with three 40's and a menagerie, 60 ft. round with four 30's. Possibly a new padroom and dining tent were also received at this time. The sideshow, 50 ft. round with two 30's was new at the beginning of the season.

Downie returned to New England playing the first week back and forth between Vermont and New Hampshire. Members of the New Hampshire were guests of Harry Mack, press agent, at one performance. The show went into Maine at Biddeford, July 15, and covered the state quite extensively in 15 stands. The show had its share of rain while there. In fact rain had been a disturbing factor through much of the season so far. After Maine the show played three dates in New Hampshire and was at Salem, Mass., August 5, which saw both performances packed despite very hot weather. Dates at Hyannis and Falmouth followed. The press boys pulled off a good gimic at Falmouth by staging a freckled children contest. Nearly 100 kids were in the contest to determine the most freckled boy and girl. They were guests of Manager Sparks and The Falmouth Enterprise at the afternoon performance and were marched to the center ring where they were judged by Reb Russell. Also that day Earl Chapin May, noted circus historian and writer, led the band in Semper Fidelis during the center ring concert preceeding each performance. The weather was unusually hot for Cape Cod and it was 100 degrees under the big top in the afternoon. The heat cut down the size of the crowd at the matinee but there was a big house on hand at night.

Bridgeport, Conn., August 9, saw good business despite it being a blazing hot day. The matinee was comfortably filled with capacity at night. Avery Tudor received emergency treatment for a powder burn suffered when his partner hit him too hard with a slapstick during their act. This unusual accident was one of many which plagued the Downie performers all through the 1937 season.

Stamford, Conn., August 10, was the final date in New England and then the show moved on to Long Island for stands at Hempstead, Southampton, Patchogue, and Huntington. At Huntington, August 14, there was a terrific thunder and lightning storm which played havoc with the big top and made the 3000 spectators a little jittery but there were no injuries nor serious damage to the canvas.

The August 14, 1937 Billboard said that the Downie Bros. band was now unionized. William H. Stevens, representative of the American Federation of Musicians visited the show and signed an agreement with Sparks to place the band under the





Photo No. 17 — Capt. H.C. Pickard and his Frisco seals, Downie Bros. Circus, season of 1937. Photo by Eddie Jackson.

union. At present the band had a total of 13 members.

Departing Long Island the show moved through the Holland Tunnel into New Jersey where two stands were played. Next it headed southward with a date at Dover, Del., August 18, followed by Maryland stands at Easton, Cambridge, and Salisbury. There was very heavy opposition from a double header baseball game at Salisbury but the night performance still had a large crowd.

The Sept. 4, 1937 Billboard had a nice summary of recent Downie activities. It said that members of a unique Three Score and Ten Club, all over 70, were guests of Manager Sparks when the show played Norfolk, Va. August 23. The visitors were taken behind the scenes, met Reb Russell, and later occupied reserved seats for the perfor-

Photo No. 18 — Downie Bros. trucks at Cental City Park, Macon, Ga. winterquarters just prior to start of the 1937 season. Dome of the ring barn is in background. Photo by Eddie Jackson.



mance. Unfortunately rain hit again at Norfolk. Other developments of late had Jen Belasco joining the show as story man replacing Will Wilken. It was reported that William DeBarrie's sideshow had been drawing well and that Myrna Karsey had purchased more snakes from Benson's Animal Farm in New England when the show was in that area. When questioned about the season so far Sparks replied that business had been satisfactory but "not worth writing home about." The same Billboard had this advertisement, "Downie Bros. Circus wants asst. boss canvasman, sideshow boss canvasman, and seat men." This ad indicates the show was experiencing some personnel problems.

North Carolina came through with some fine business, a contrast to the spotty take the show had experienced for the last few weeks. Three performances were given at both Raleigh and Charlotte. The injury jinx was still around as Miss Georgiana (Mrs. Mickey Lund Larkin) fell from the wire during her backward foot slide at Hickory, N.C., Sept. 2. At first it was felt she was not seriously injured and she tried to return to the performance at Washington, N.C. on September 11 but couldn't. Her back was then placed in a cast. Charles Poplin broke a leg during a performance when the show was in North Carolina. Dick Scatterday told The Billboard that he had been getting a good lineup of banners for the big top each day in the area. The show had a good day at Durham, N.C. with an excellent matinee crowd and the night house was almost a sellout.

The Sept. 25, 1937 Billboard said that a reporter had recently visited the Downie lot and noted the equipment was up to standard although the season had been a hard one and much rain had been encountered. Fortunately the weather was now ideal. He noted the costumes were beautiful and that Reb Russell was holding 80 percent of the audience for the aftershow on most days. The sideshow was also doing good business.

Downie entered South Carolina at Florence, September 17, and played stands at Charleston and Columbia before going into Georgia at Augusta on September 21. After Dublin and Statesboro the show moved to Savannah for a two day engagement, Sept.

CHAS. SPARKS  
PRESENTS  
**DOWNIE  
BROS.  
CIRCUS**

**TEDDY** 4 INCHES  
TALLER  
THAN  
JUMBO

**DOWNIE BIG BROS. RING CIRCUS**

CHATTANOOGA

AFTERNOON and NIGHT  
**TUESDAY**  
**OCT. 6**

Photo No. 6 — Downie Bros. one sheet upright featuring the male tusker, Teddy, has red title on yellow background. Date tag is for Chattanooga, Tenn., Oct. 6, 1936. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.

24-25 under auspices of the Savannah Police Benevolent Association. It drew well both days despite one baseball and two football games during the period. It was announced here that Reb Russell was returning to Hollywood for motion picture work upon conclusion of the season.

A permit which had earlier been given to play Brunswick, Georgia was



cancelled upon recommendation of the local board of health. Just what the trouble was city officials didn't say, but in all probability it was a local infantile paralysis situation. In those days this disease often caused local officials to panic and take action to bar amusements such as circuses. It was rare however that local theaters ever had to close regardless of how severe the situation was. It was the travelling shows which suffered.

The show next went into Florida to play two days in Jacksonville, then returned to Georgia for Waycross and Thomasville, before entering Alabama for a single date at Dothan, October 1. It was back to Florida after that to play Panama City and Tallahassee, then came a return to Georgia and stands at Moultrie and Valdosta. A long series of Florida dates began at Gainesville, October 12, where Clint Shuford said the temperature was 119 degrees in the ticket wagon. About this time Mary Atterbury, who had just finished six weeks playing fairs, joined the Butters Troupe, wire act, for the rest of the season.



Photo No. 19 — Downie Bros. trucks at Macon, Ga. winterquarters just prior to start of the 1937 season. Photo by Eddie Jackson.

The Billboard reported Downie had good business in Florida including a straw matinee and full night house at St. Petersburg. While at Miami Beach many of the Downie showfolk enjoyed the surf. Bertie Hodgini arranged a party from which some didn't leave until 5 a.m. Georgiana Larkin returned to the program after having her back in a cast for six weeks. Carlos Carreon sustained a bad shoulder sprain and Reb Russell got a bad sprain while doing an exhibition of the pony express ride.

Leaving Florida the show played Mobile, Ala., October 28, on a new lot near Hartwell Field. Under auspices of the Elks the matinee crowd was very light with a two-thirds house at night.

Sparks who had started the boys around the various circuses to talking back in January when he announced his negotiations to use the Sparks and



John Robinson titles hit them again with this advertisement which appeared in the Oct. 30, 1937 Billboard. "FOR SALE, Downie Bros. Circus with title. Property can be seen as per route. WANTED, steel flat cars, stock cars, coaches, baggage wagons, cages, tableau wagons, steam calliope. State where property can be seen. Charles Sparks."

The Under the Marquee Column of The Billboard remarked, "Looks like a go for Charlie Sparks to have a show on rails next season, according to his ad in last week's issue. There has been a great deal of talk for several years regarding Sparks returning to the railroad field."

The show was at Atmore, Ala., Oc-

Photo No. 21 — Downie Bros. sideshow bannerline, season of 1937. Photo by Eddie Jackson.

tober 30, followed by Greenville, Selma, Troy, and Eufala. Then Downie went into its home state for the final stand of the season, at Albany, Georgia, November 4. The Nov. 6, 1937 Billboard in noting the closing said that Downie Bros., Tom Mix, and Russell Bros. were all pulling stakes for the season three days apart. Downie was closing at Albany, Nov. 4, after putting in 11,791 miles, Tom Mix finishing at El Dorado, Ark., Nov. 6, after logging 10,521 miles, and Russell Bros. calling it a season at Monett, Mo., Nov. 7, no mileage being given for that show. Downie moved as usual to its winter quarters in Central City Park, Macon, Ga.

It didn't take Sparks long to get an inquiry in response to his ad offering to sell the Downie show. The following telegram from Sparks to Doc Hughes, who had evidently asked for details, is from the collection of CHS Gale A. Ahrens of Cincinnati. The telegram read.

"WESTERN UNION. Nov. 2, 1937. Time 3:35 p.m.  
To: Dr. B.F. Hughes, Seminole

Photo No. 20 — Downie Bros. practicing loading of camels and horses the day before start of the 1937 season at Macon, Ga. winterquarters. Photo by Eddie Jackson.







Hotel, Jacksonville, Fla. Property invoices over Ninety Thousand Dollars. This is figuring depreciation. The original cost of show One Hundred and Fifty Thousand to assemble to say nothing of good will and title. Will sell to you or party you have for Sixty-Five Thousand Dollars cash. Only satisfactory way to do business is to come on route. Eufaula, Alabama, Wednesday, Albany, Georgia, Thursday. Confirm. Chas. Sparks."

The property inventory printed here is also from the collection of Gale Ahrens and came to him by way of the late Doc Hughes. Ahrens remarks, "Dr. B.F. Hughes was on the Downie show in 1934 and 1935 and served as chief cowboy in the concert, doing a whip act etc. His wife, Ruby, was also on the show. I got to know 'Doc' in the 1960's here in Cincy as a fellow member of the John Robinson Tent of CFA. He was a real character, a remarkable story teller. Unfortunately

Photo No. 22 — Reb Russell and group of Indians on Downie Bros. lot, season of 1937. Photo by Eddie Jackson.

he has departed to the 'Great Lot' in the sky and has taken all his tales with him."

Ahrens calls attention that the amount of the property inventory totals \$86,205.00 which is somewhat less than the "over ninety thousand" listed in the telegram but is a little over twenty-one thousand above Sparks's asking price of 65 G's for the show. In all probability the individual item prices on the inventory would be the charge for a piecemeal sale of the show whereas a buyer could get the entire package for \$65,000 cash.

We have turned up no further information concerning the proposal to sell the show to Doc Hughes or to anyone else. Shortly after Sparks returned to Macon he became seriously ill. Although the exact nature of his ail-

Photo No. 23 — Eno troupe of Japanese acrobats, Downie Bros., season of 1937. Photo by Eddie Jackson.



ment was not made public his condition was well publicized throughout the circus world.

The Nov. 27, 1937 Billboard said that Sparks was now on his way to recovery after being seriously ill in his suite at the Hotel Dempsey in Macon. He was expected to resume active work in a few weeks. The article concluded that there had been no discussion on his future plans for a railroad show, or selling Downie Bros.

The Dec. 4, 1937 Billboard said that Sparks was going to Hot Springs, Ark. to rest and take the baths following his recent illness. He would be away from Macon for three weeks or longer. In the meantime there was very little activity at winterquarters and no further word was forthcoming on Sparks plans for a railroad show. Carlos Carreon was at quarters breaking some stock and it was mentioned that Karl and Mickey Larkin were back in Macon after closing with the Mighty Haag Show which they had joined after Downie concluded its season.

The final reports of the 1937 circus season were now in. It had been a very good year for Ringling-Barnum and Cole Bros. The season had also been pretty good for the new Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus and although Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto had done alright the take wasn't as high as it was the previous year. Sparks didn't make many comments other than saying his season had been successful but it was obvious it hadn't been as good as 1936. In general business for all shows started off well, held up on through the summer, but tapered off during the fall. The depressed markets for agricultural products in the south held down the show's profits in that area in the latter part of the season. It would later be learned that Sparks was one of the few showmen to correctly assess the real reasons for the drop off in business in the fall of 1937 and would adjust his plans for the next season accordingly.

As the year came to an end there was

## CIRCUS MODELS, BOOKS AND OTHER THINGS

One quarter inch scale model Wagons and Baggage Hoeses, New and Used Circus Books. Original and Reproduced lithos, Circus phonograph records, Programs, Route Books, Billboards, White Tops and just about everything you need for your circus collection.

For Example:

LION CAGE, BEAR DEN, CALLIOPE, BAND OR TAB WAGON — \$2.00 ea.; Set of Eight Baggage Horses with Driver — \$2.00 set; Joe McKennon's Great Circus Book "Horse Dung Trail" — \$12.50; Dean Jensen's Book "The Biggest, The Smallest, The Longest" — \$15.00.

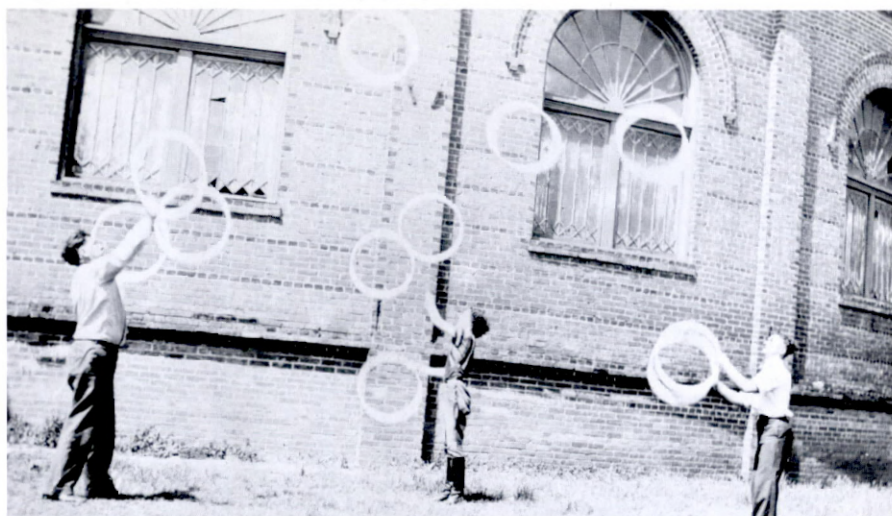
Send 25¢ for list of many items available.

Betty Schmid  
485 Sleepy Hollow Rd.  
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15228



Photo No. 24 — The Karl Larkin trio practicing new juggling act, Downie Bros. winterquarters, Macon, Ga., just prior to start of 1937 season. Ring barn is in back. Photo by Eddie Jackson.

nothing further in the trade publications concerning Sparks plans to sell Downie Bros. and frame a railroad show but it was pretty well guessed that in all probability he would continue to operate his motorized Downie Bros. in 1938 as usual. Whether it was his illness, failure to get a satisfactory offer for Downie Bros., or inability to obtain equipment for a rail show at prices he would pay, which caused him to cancel his plans for a railer is not known to the author.



## INVENTORY OF DOWNIE BROS. CIRCUS

(Prepared for potential buyers at end of the 1937 Season)

### INVENTORY OF STABLES:

17 horses. Out of these horses there are two six horse liberty acts. Fourteen horses broken to do menage. Six high jumping horses. Saddles, trappings, blankets for all. Price for the above horses, trappings etc. \$ 6,800.00  
Six ponies broken for liberty act, and all necessary trappings 900.00  
One pickup mule 150.00  
One pony chariot and harness for four ponies 100.00  
TOTAL \$ 7,950.00

### INVENTORY OF ANIMALS:

3 female elephants broken for an act price \$1750.00 each \$ 5,250.00  
4 small female elephants broke and work together, price \$1800.00 7,200.00  
3 camels, price \$750.00 each 2,250.00  
1 female tiger, price \$500.00 500.00  
1 female kangaroo, price \$150.00 150.00  
1 sloth bear, price \$150.00 150.00  
7 rhesus monkeys, price \$15.00 each 105.00  
3 lions and lioness' price \$350.00 each 1,050.00  
2 leopards, price \$250.00 each 500.00  
1 jaguar, price \$250.00 250.00  
SUB TOTAL \$17,405.00  
Howdahs for elephants, trappings, harness, buckets, tubs, forks, rakes  
and numerous miscellaneous items 300.00  
TOTAL \$17,705.00

### COOKHOUSE:

Completely equipped to feed 300 people. Equipment includes, steamtable, 2 #10 Donavin Field Ranges, 30 x 70 dining tent, 20 x 30 kitchen tent and all necessary utensils, price \$ 1,500.00

### SIDESHOW

50 ft. round top with two 30 ft. middle pieces. Equipment includes, banners, poles, stakes, riggings, stages, ticket boxes, etc. price \$ 1,400.00

### MAIN TENT

Practically new, size 120 ft. round top with three 40 ft. middle pieces. New marquee size 20 x 30. Price for both complete with all necessary stakes, poles, rigging, tools, stake pullers and miscellaneous items pertaining to same \$ 4,200.00

### MENAGERIE TENT

Size 60 ft. round top with four 30 ft. middle pieces, complete with stakes, rigging, etc. price \$ 400.00

### DRESSING TENT

Size 30 ft. round top with four 20 ft. middle pieces, complete with stakes, rigging, feed troughs. Included are 5 Indian tepees, back yard sidewall and miscellaneous items, price \$ 350.00

### ADVANCE DEPARTMENT

One International truck (2 ton), special body \$ 1,200.00  
Three Chevrolet trucks (all special bodies) price \$700.00 ea. 2,100.00  
Tools, paste brushes, paste barrels & miscellaneous items 100.00  
Ten days supply, special paper 1,000.00  
TOTAL \$ 4,400.00

### WARDROBE DEPARTMENT

All wardrobe for tournaments, white and colored band uniforms, ushers and ticket sellers' uniforms, elephant blankets, property men's coveralls, waiters coats and many miscellaneous items, price \$ 1,100.00

### LIGHT DEPARTMENT

Three 15KW light plants, cable, fixtures, tools, light standards, lamps, and complete public address system. Plants mounted in special built semi-trailer attached to Chevrolet truck. Sound equipment installed in small two wheel trailer. Price for all: light plants, sound equipment, truck and semi trailer, two wheel trailer and all items pertaining to light plants and public address system \$ 6,000.00

### SEATS

18 lengths of grandstand 9 tier high, complete with chairs, 30 lengths of blue seats; band stand. Price for all including jacks, stringers, seat chains and all items necessary to erect seats

### INVENTORY OF TRUCKS, AND DESCRIPTION OF BODIES AND SEMI-TRAILERS

#### TRUCKS ONLY

#10, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (animal cage) \$ 800.00  
#12, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (animal cage) 800.00  
#14, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (animal cage) 800.00  
#16, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (animal cage) 800.00  
#18, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (animal cage) 800.00  
#20, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (animal cage) 800.00  
#22, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (animal cage) 800.00  
#28, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet (used for hauling calliope, special body) 800.00  
#40, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet (white band sleeper, completely equipped with mattresses, linen etc. to sleep 12 people 1,000.00  
#55, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (used for grocery and cookhouse supplies) 800.00  
#60, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet (rack body to haul seat planks) 600.00  
#69, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (colored band sleeper, completely equipped with mattresses, linen, etc. to sleep 12 people 900.00  
#80, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (water wagon, 500 gallon tank) 600.00  
#84, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (hauls menagerie canvas) 800.00  
#88, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet (1937) (mechanical trucks, special body, reserve gasoline tanks, towing hookup on rear) 1,000.00  
#50, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (school bus body, hauls Indians, trunk and luggage rack on roof) 500.00  
#1, 1/2 ton Chevrolet (pickup body) 450.00  
#17, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet (special body used for hauling wardrobe, equipped with lockers, racks, shelves etc.) 800.00

#### TRUCKS TO WHICH ARE ATTACHED SEMI-TRAILERS

#11, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (ticket office, equipped with desks, chairs, filing cabinets, and miscellaneous fixtures) 25 ft. long 1,200.00  
#15, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (Commissary dept., used for candy stand and novelties stock) 20 ft. long 900.00  
#32, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (18 ft. long, rack body hauls props) 900.00  
#56, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (24 ft. long, hauls camels & ponies) 900.00  
#61, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (20 ft. long, hauls sideshow baggage) 900.00  
#68, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (18 ft. long, hauls sideshow baggage) 900.00  
#70, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (24 1/2 ft. long, dining department, equipped with special built ice boxes) 1,000.00  
#72, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (20 ft. long, hauls dressing room trunks) 900.00  
#72, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (24 ft. long, built special to haul stringers) 900.00  
#75, (THIS TRUCK AND SEMI-TRAILER CARRIES LIGHT PLANTS, PRICE OF SAME INCLUDED IN PRICE OF LIGHT PLANT)  
#76, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (25 ft. long, hauls poles) 900.00  
#79, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (24 ft. long, hauls poles) 900.00  
#81, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (18 ft. long, hauls props (1937 truck)) 1,250.00  
#82, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, year 1937, (24 1/2 ft. long hauls main tent and sidewall, equipped with canvas loader,) price complete 1,350.00  
#90, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (18 ft. long, hauls all jacks & seat blocks) 900.00  
#92, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (25 ft. long, hauls elephants) 1,250.00  
#94, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (25 ft. long, hauls elephants) 1,250.00  
#96, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (20 ft. long, stake & chain, berths in front end to sleep 4 people) 900.00  
#86, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, (25 ft. long, hauls all grandstand chairs) (year 1937) 1,250.00  
#99, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet, year 1937, (22 ft. long, hauls seat planks) 1,250.00  
#100, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet (24 ft. long, hauls horses) 900.00  
#200, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet (24 ft. long, hauls horses) 900.00  
#98, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet (24 ft. long, hauls horses) 900.00  
#66, 1 1/2 ton Chevrolet (year 1937) (22 ft. long, hauls seats) 1,250.00

#### SMALL 2 WHEEL TRAILERS, (PULLED BY TRUCKS)

LUNCH STAND, 14 ft. long 150.00  
CARPENTER SHOP, 14 ft. long 150.00  
RESERVE SEAT OFFICE, 14 ft. long, equipped with desks, chairs, files 200.00  
SOUND EQUIPMENT, 15 ft. long, INCLUDED IN PRICE OF LIGHT PLANTS  
TOTAL \$38,000.00

(Author's Note. Show evidently had two vehicles with No. 72, although possibility exists there was a typo error in original inventory)



# KARL WALLEDA IS MAKING HEADLINES

## The Philadelphia Inquirer

Vol. 294, No. 153

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Historic Philadelphia's Oldest Daily—The Bicentennial Newspaper

Tuesday, June 1, 1976

15 CENTS

### The great Wallenda crosses the Vet



WAY ABOVE IT ALL, 71-year-old Karl Wallenda walks a cable across Veterans Stadium yesterday. Standing 200 feet above the field on the five-

eighths-inch steel cable, Wallenda unfurled a Bicentennial flag and the American flag from his balancing bar after doing a headstand midway across.

The 640-foot walk took 18 minutes and was performed before 51,211 spectators between games at a Phillies double-header.

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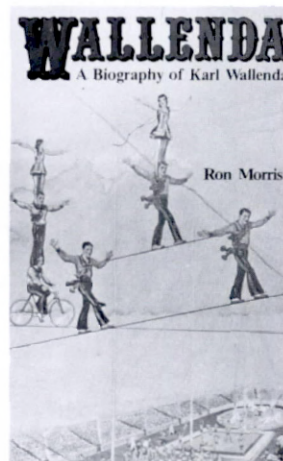
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# ONESHOT

By STUART THAYER

We began this column several years ago as a sort of marketplace for research that lacked the depth necessary for full-length pieces. The hope was that others, seeing our example, would be tempted to contribute their work, or parts of work-in-progress, and thus a kind of pulse-taking could be maintained on the subject and direction of circus historiography.

It has not taken such a turn and we announce here the last effort in the series. Before leaving, however, we would like to present our impression of the present status of research and take a look at its future.

This writer just completed a four-year effort on the history of the circus from 1793 to 1829 and in the course of the research had to examine all the material, published and unpublished, having reference to the subject years. The errors in previous narratives were numerous and only came to light because of the nature of our own investigation. How many times we cursed, under our breath, some writer of the past who stated as fact something we, after much time and effort, discovered to be false. And they were as often errors of interpretation as they were errors of fact. However, before donning the robe of virtue — or is it a crown? — we must confess that there are blank spaces in our own narrative; names and dates and rosters we could not find. And some day a wiser head will turn these facts to light and wonder what we were doing with our time, that we could not solve these mysteries.

This is cited here to make the point that research is never fully completed nor interpretation final. There will always be work at every level of the subject for anyone who wants to undertake it. P.T. Barnum is undoubtedly the most important person in American history who had any dealings with the circus business. We say this in the knowledge that he is not an important person in circus history. His life transcends the circus; he is an American institution and the embodiment of a spirit in American life that has interested sociologists and biographers more than that of anyone else who touched the genre. And every few years someone has a go at interpreting Barnum to us and this will no doubt continue. Each generation has to write its own history.

At the present time work in circus history is at a high level, both in energy expended and the quality of results. Not all of it is published and some that is, academic papers for instance, receives little notice, yet we doubt that there has been so much well-researched material produced in any period comparable to the last ten years.

One reason for this output has been the establishment of public collections of material. Such centers as the Circus World Museum and the Hertzberg Collection and the State University at Normal, Illinois, were not available a generation ago. Even now, the John and Mabel Ringling Museum is just acquiring the facilities to make its collection open to research.

Another impetus to investigation has been the recent acceptance in academic circles of the circus as a subject worthy of a student's time. In the past several years work by both professors and degree candidates has added a great deal to our knowledge. The level of work required in research of this type is of great benefit to the rest of us. We recently conferred with a Ph.D. candidate who is writing his thesis on the theatre-type acts in John Bill Ricketts' programs. The scholarship under which he is doing this provided funds for him to duplicate every one of Ricketts' newspaper advertisements. This bonanza of material will eventually reside in one of our public collections where it will be available to all of us.

Not long ago we reported on the degree work of CHS member John F. Polacsek. In the course of his research he read nearly all the surviving newspapers in northern Ohio of the period prior to the Civil War. He didn't need all that he found, but here is a great reservoir of information, fully noted and documented.

At the popular Culture Association meeting in Tampa in November, and in Chicago in August, both 1975, papers on the circus were presented and accepted. While these are usually written by persons interested primarily in other fields, a Fine Arts teacher lecturing on circus wagon carvings, for instance, they are still examples of broad interest and research in the history of the circus.

The publishing of research, of course, centers on the *Bandwagon* and its able editor, Fred D. Pfening, Jr. In the fifteen years he has managed production of the journal most of the important research in the field has appeared in its pages. The availability of a rostrum is very important to the growth of interest in any subject, circus history is no exception.

From the death of George Chindahl to the appointment of Joseph Bradbury as National Historian, the CFA publication *White Tops* was of minimal value to the historian. Since his ascension to that post, Bradbury has made that department of the magazine quite interesting and it now makes a regular contribution to our knowledge.

Writers whose work we see consistently and without which we might have little to read include Chang Reynolds, Charles Amidon, Joseph Bradbury, Tom Parkinson, Robert Loeffler, Art "Doc" Miller, Donald Hensey and Fred Pfening.

We wish we saw more from the likes of Richard Reynolds, Fred Dahlinger, Jr., Fred Pfening, III and Bob Parkinson, all of whom have done interesting work in the past.

Beyond these there are researchers we know of who are adding to the accumulation of knowledge of field shows and feel they are not yet in shape to publish. Perhaps the hardest working researcher of them all is Robert Brisendine, of Atlanta. He has as his goal reading all the newspapers published in Georgia. To date he has an impressive compendium of information and in time we hope he makes it available in some form as it will be of utmost value.

In mentioning Brisendine's work we are reminded that he lives near several sizable newspaper collections and certainly such proximity encourages one. There are two researchers near Worcester, Massachusetts. Charles Amidon and Copeland MacAllister, who threaten between them to read every paper at the American Antiquarian Society. Yet we notice a dearth of research from New York City, Boston, Chicago and Philadelphia, all cities with impressive library facilities. We have no explanation for this. The Hertzberg Collection in San Antonio is somewhat isolated, geographically, and thus very much under-used by researchers. It is unfortunate, for the amount of material there is impressive.

We think the future looks very bright for writing and publication. We have just been made aware of research into the application of computer techniques in route analysis. What a page that turns. The subject that enthalls us all is very esoteric and the research of it, because it is still in its infancy, is arduous, so much so that it may be a wonder that as much is accomplished as is. However, we find ourselves constantly agreeably surprised to find new writers exploring new subjects. We predict it will continue, just as has the subject, the circus itself.







CHRISTY BROS. CIRCUS PARADE  
TORRINGTON, CONN. - 1929

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CENTURY  
144 W 46 ST.  
N.Y.C.